

ANDREW GINOCCHIO: THE ASCENT OF RENO IRON WORKS

Interviewee: Andrew Ginocchio

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Description

Andrew Ginocchio was born in the northern Italian community of Comuneglia di Ligure on June 29, 1893. His father, Giovanni Ginocchio, traveled to the United States in 1864 at the age of eighteen, and found work in San Francisco with the Central Pacific Railroad. Giovanni stayed with the company as a laborer, and later a cook, until the Central Pacific joined the Union Pacific at Promontory Point, Utah, on May 10, 1869, in a famous ceremony which he witnessed.

Giovanni Ginocchio then went to Virginia City during the silver bonanza. About 1875 Giovanni returned to Italy, carrying with him substantial savings from his labor in the C & C mine.

Giovanni married Maria Rossi of the Rossi village several years later in Varese Ligure. From this union were born Andrew, Louis, Maria, Margaret, Giustina, and Nice. Giovanni had many ties through investment and relatives that eventually brought most of the children to Reno and its environs.

At the encouragement of his father, Andrew Ginocchio entered training as an apprentice blacksmith under the instruction of a well-known artisan in Italy. He attained master craftsman's status in 1910, at the age of seventeen. Shortly thereafter, he set out for Reno. When Ginocchio arrived in Reno he worked with his cousin, John Ginocchio, in what was later to become the Reno Blacksmith Shop. He later worked for George Armstrong, who owned Armstrong Manufacturing Company, a fairly large and prominent foundry located on Fourth Street in Reno. Ginocchio grew close to Armstrong, and treated him as one would a father. Armstrong eventually made Andrew general manager of his company.

In 1917, while still working for Armstrong, Ginocchio volunteered for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. He served for two years in France. Upon his return to the United States, Ginocchio secured employment with Sacramento's S. S. Allbright Company, a company that manufactured buses. Ginocchio designed an automatic door opener which was widely used for a number of years thereafter.

While in Sacramento, he met Viola Chilton Barnes, a Northwestern University graduate of law, and they were married. She and Andrew owned a Buick Agency and garage in Lincoln, California. Their only child, Andrea, was born in 1929. In 1930 the family moved permanently to Reno, where Ginocchio bought half interest in the Reno Blacksmith Shop. He and his cousin, John, remained partners in the iron shop until John's death in 1956. Viola Ginocchio worked there as the office manager and head bookkeeper until her death in 1956.

Upon his death, John Ginocchio left his interest in the Reno Iron Works Company, by then a thriving structural steel fabrication and erection company, to his son-in-law, Earl Avansino. In 1971 Andrea (Ginocchio) Pelter and her

(Continued on next page.)

Description (continued)

husband bought the Avansino half interest, and Andrea Pelter became chairman of the board and chief executive officer of the company. Andrew Ginocchio remained in his long-time position as president. Reno Iron Works moved from Reno to 600 Spice Islands Drive in Sparks, Nevada, in 1983.

Andrew Ginocchio received the Builders of the Golden State Award for his contribution to both the Golden Gate and Bay Bridge construction in the method used to camber the steel components. During World War II he trained over one thousand American servicemen in welding techniques necessary to man the certified welding stations building Liberty Ships. For over thirty years Ginocchio volunteered to teach University of Nevada engineering students welding, blueprint reading, and other hands-on skills. He also helped many students finance their education. His greatest reward has been their ongoing success and friendship.

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MADE POSSIBLE BY A GRANT FROM THE
GRACE DANGBERG FOUNDATION

An Oral History Conducted by R.T. King
Edited by R.T. King

University of Nevada Oral History Program

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CONTENTS

Preface to the Digital Edition	ix
Original Preface	xi
Introduction by Andrea Ginocchio Pelter	xiii
1. Nevada Antecedents: Giovanni Ginocchio with the Central Pacific and on the Comstock, 1863-1873	1
2. Learning the Blacksmith Trade in Italy and Reno, 1893-1912	17
3. With the Armstrong Manufacturing Company, 1912-1917	43
4. In Europe with the United States Army, 1917-1919	57
5. California Interlude, 1919-1930	65
6. Reno and the Reno Blacksmith Shop, 1930-1941	73
7. Reno Iron Works and Community Expansion, 1941-1986	97
Photographs	111
Original Index: For Reference Only	119

PREFACE TO THE DIGITAL EDITION

Established in 1964, the University of Nevada Oral History Program (UNOHP) explores the remembered past through rigorous oral history interviewing, creating a record for present and future researchers. The program's collection of primary source oral histories is an important body of information about significant events, people, places, and activities in twentieth and twenty-first century Nevada and the West.

The UNOHP wishes to make the information in its oral histories accessible to a broad range of patrons. To achieve this goal, its transcripts must speak with an intelligible voice. However, no type font contains symbols for physical gestures and vocal modulations which are integral parts of verbal communication. When human speech is represented in print, stripped of these signals, the result can be a morass of seemingly tangled syntax and incomplete sentences—totally verbatim transcripts sometimes verge on incoherence. Therefore, this transcript has been lightly edited.

While taking great pains not to alter meaning in any way, the editor may have removed false starts, redundancies, and the “uhs,” “ahs,” and other noises with which speech is often liberally sprinkled; compressed some passages which, in unaltered form, misrepresent the chronicler's meaning; and relocated some material to place information in its intended context. Laughter is represented with [laughter] at the end of a sentence in which it occurs, and ellipses are used to indicate that a statement has been interrupted or is incomplete...or that there is a pause for dramatic effect.

As with all of our oral histories, while we can vouch for the authenticity of the interviews in the UNOHP collection, we advise readers to keep in mind that these are remembered pasts, and we do not claim that the recollections are entirely free of error. We can state, however, that the transcripts accurately reflect the oral history recordings on which they were based. Accordingly, each transcript should be approached with the

same prudence that the intelligent reader exercises when consulting government records, newspaper accounts, diaries, and other sources of historical information. All statements made here constitute the remembrance or opinions of the individuals who were interviewed, and not the opinions of the UNOHP.

In order to standardize the design of all UNOHP transcripts for the online database, most have been reformatted, a process that was completed in 2012. This document may therefore differ in appearance and pagination from earlier printed versions. Rather than compile entirely new indexes for each volume, the UNOHP has made each transcript fully searchable electronically. If a previous version of this volume existed, its original index has been appended to this document for reference only. A link to the entire catalog can be found online at <http://oralhistory.unr.edu/>.

For more information on the UNOHP or any of its publications, please contact the University of Nevada Oral History Program at Mail Stop 0324, University of Nevada, Reno, NV, 89557-0324 or by calling 775/784-6932.

Alicia Barber
Director, UNOHP
July 2012

ORIGINAL PREFACE

The University of Nevada Oral History Program (OHP) engages in systematic interviewing of persons who can provide firsthand descriptions of events, people and places that give history its substance. The products of this research are the tapes of the interviews and their transcriptions.

In themselves, oral history interviews are not history. However, they often contain valuable primary source material, as useful in the process of historiography as the written sources to which historians have customarily turned. Verifying the accuracy of all of the statements made in the course of an interview would require more time and effort than the OHP's operating budget permits. The program can vouch that the statements were made, but it cannot attest that they are free of error. Accordingly, oral histories should be read with the same prudence that the reader exercises when consulting government records, newspaper accounts, diaries and other sources of historical information.

It is the policy of the OHP to produce transcripts that are as close to verbatim as

possible, but some alteration of the text is generally both unavoidable and desirable. When human speech is captured in print the result can be a morass of tangled syntax, false starts and incomplete sentences, sometimes verging on incoherency. The type font contains no symbols for the physical gestures and the diverse vocal modulations that are integral parts of communication through speech. Experience shows that totally verbatim transcripts are often largely unreadable and therefore a waste of the resources expended in their production. While keeping alterations to a minimum the OHP will, in preparing a text:

- a. generally delete false starts, redundancies and the uhs, ahs and other noises with which speech is often liberally sprinkled;

- b. occasionally compress language that would be confusing to the reader in unaltered form;

- c. rarely shift a portion of a transcript to place it in its proper context; and

- d. enclose in [brackets] explanatory information or words that were not uttered

but have been added to render the text intelligible.

While reading the Andrew Ginocchio transcript it should be kept in mind that Mr. Ginocchio's native tongue is Italian. Although he is fluent and well-read in English, which long ago became his principal language, Mr. Ginocchio's heritage is occasionally evident in the structure of his speech. There will be readers who prefer to take their oral history straight, without even the minimal editing that occurred in the production of this text; they are directed to the tape recording.

Copies of all or part of this work and the tape recording from which it is derived are available from:

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INTRODUCTION

My father, Andrew Ginocchio, was born on June 29, 1893, in the northern Italian community of Comuneglia di Ligure. His father, Giovanni Ginocchio, was an adventurous sort who had traveled to the United States in 1864 at the age of 18. Shortly after arriving in San Francisco, he found work with the nascent Central Pacific Railroad. Giovanni stayed with the company as a laborer, and later a cook, until the Central Pacific joined the Union Pacific at Promontory Point, Utah, on May 10, 1869, in a famous ceremony which he witnessed.

Following the completion of the railroad, Giovanni went to Virginia City, which was then booming in the midst of its silver bonanza. His letters home from this period reveal an interest in Reno as an attractive place to live. About 1875 Giovanni returned to Italy, carrying with him substantial savings from his labor in the C & C mine.

Some years later Giovanni married Maria Rossi, of the Rossi village in Varese Ligure. She was from a prominent family, which, like the Ginocchios, had farming interests, grocery

businesses and other enterprises. Maria was 20 years Giovanni's junior. To this union were born Andrew, Louis, Maria, Margaret, Giustina, and Nice. Giovanni had many ties through investment and relatives that brought the children to Reno and its environs. All of the children but Margaret came to the United States. Ultimately, Louis returned to Italy, but 4 remained.

At the encouragement of his father, Andrew entered training as an apprentice blacksmith under the instruction of a well-known artisan in Italy. He attained master craftsman's status in 1910, at the age of 17. (Included in this oral history is a photo of his master craftsman assignment to forge a rose from a 3/8 inch round, 20 inch long piece of mild steel. He passed with excellence, which was the highest mark attainable.) Shortly thereafter, he set out for Reno. Upon arrival in Reno, Andrew worked with his cousin, John Ginocchio, in what was later to become the Reno Blacksmith Shop. He later worked for George Armstrong, whom he recognizes as one would a father. George Armstrong

encouraged Andrew to join the Odd Fellows and a number of civic groups. Andrew was a member of the Board of Directors for the Reno Chamber of Commerce in 1914, having filled Armstrong's temporary vacancy. Eventually Armstrong made Andrew general manager of Armstrong Manufacturing Co., a fairly large and prominent foundry located on Fourth Street in Reno.

In 1917, while still working for Armstrong, Andrew volunteered for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. His first training took place at Lincoln Hall at the University of Nevada. Later he was stationed in Indiana, and he finally served for 2 years in France.

Upon his return to the United States, on his way through Sacramento, Andrew met some former Army buddies who secured employment for him with the S. S. Allbright Company, manufacturers of buses. During this employment he designed the automatic door openers which were to be used throughout the nation for many years thereafter. While in Sacramento, he met Viola Chilton Barnes, who was a clerk for Hiram Johnson, a renowned California jurist. As a Northwestern University graduate in law, Viola encouraged Andrew to go into business for himself. Together they successfully owned a Buick Agency and garage in Lincoln, California, which enabled them to invest in stocks and to travel throughout the world. The stock market crash in 1929 took its toll of their investments, and they decided to sell the business and move to Reno, which had been their ultimate goal.

I am their only child; I was born in 1929. In 1930 the family moved permanently to Reno, where Andrew bought, from the Bottinis, half interest in the Reno Blacksmith Shop. From that time, until Andrew's partner and cousin John died in 1956, they remained partners in a successfully growing miscellaneous iron shop.

My mother, father and I lived in the family home at 801 South Arlington Avenue, and Mother worked at Reno Iron as office manager and head bookkeeper until her death in 1956.

In the late 1950s, John Ginocchio's son-in-law, Earl Avansino, inherited John Ginocchio's interest in what was, by then, Reno Iron Works Company, Incorporated, a thriving structural steel fabrication and erection company. In 1961 the company built a new headquarters at 290 Keystone Avenue, Reno, on the corner of Fourth Street and Keystone.

In 1967, Peggy Pelter Jewett, my husband's sister, and her husband Don Jewett, a graduate civil engineer from the University of Nevada, became employees of Reno Iron. In 1971 my husband, Bill Pelter, and I bought the Avansino half interest; at that time I became Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer. Andrew Ginocchio remained in his long-time position as President; Don Jewett became Vice President; Peg Jewett, Secretary-Treasurer, and William M. Pelter, M.D., Director. That Board continued until October 15, 1986, when Vice-President Don Jewett passed away.

Bill Pelter and I grew up across the street from each other on Arlington Avenue. We attended Reno schools, and both of us graduated from the University of Nevada. We attended graduate schools outside of Nevada, but ultimately returned home in 1972 to help my father in Reno Iron Works; Bill then joined Associated Anesthesiologists of Reno as a practicing M.D. anesthesiologist.

In 1983 Reno Iron moved to 600 Spice Islands Drive, Sparks, Nevada. The facility is 92,000 square feet on 25 acres in the Sparks Industrial Park. While administration of the day-to-day operations are my responsibility, Andrew, in his ninety-third year, still works at his forge each day except Monday Rotary day.

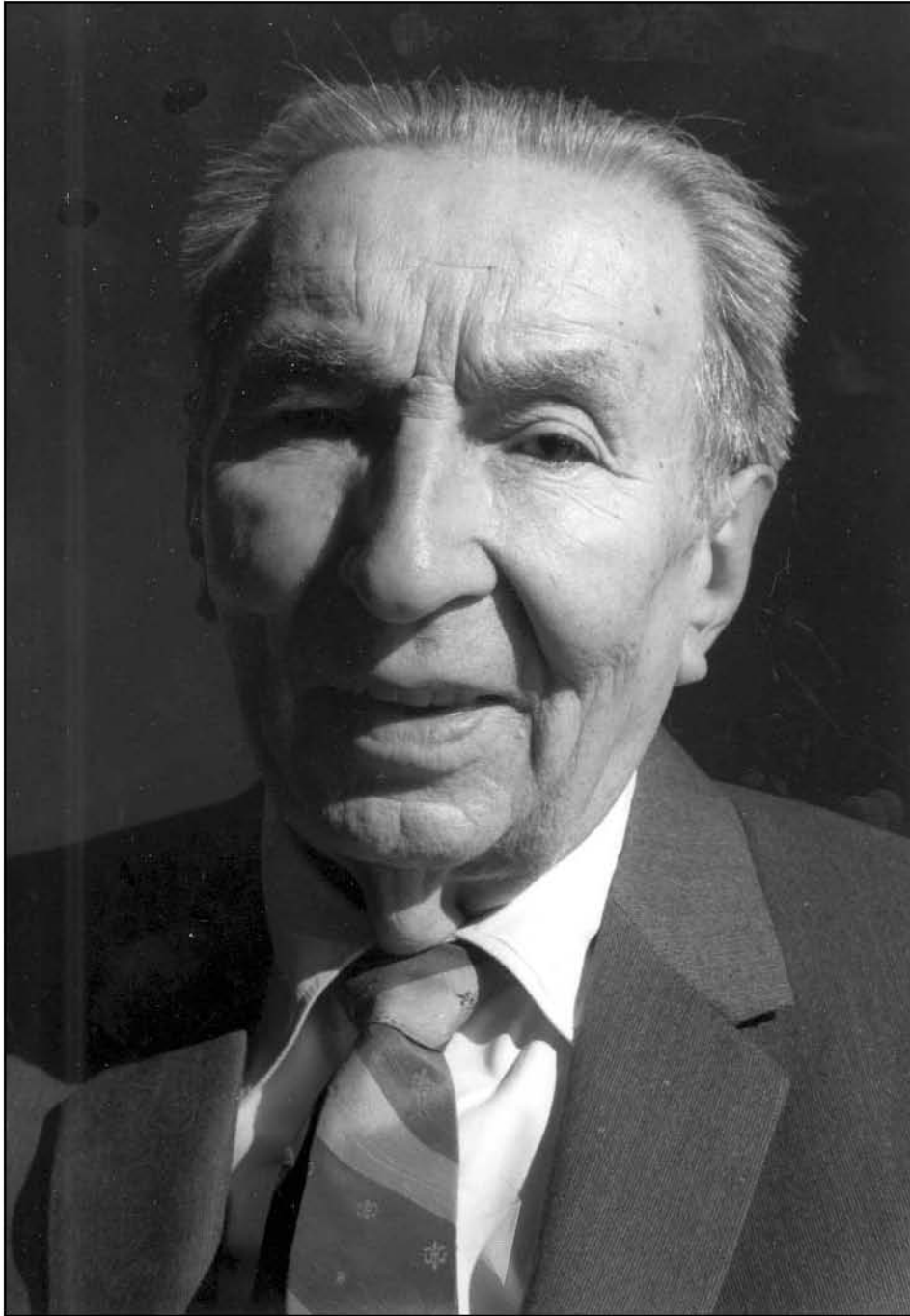
For the past 14 years, Andrew Ginocchio has made his home with Bill and me and our 3 children—Bryn, born in 1961; William, born in 1963; and Andrew, born in 1968. The home is on 2.5 acres at 2520 Faretto Lane. Here Andrew and the children have horses, a variety of pets, and an old-fashioned Italian garden. Hours in these pursuits—or together working at Andrew's forge—gives grandfather and grandchildren ample opportunity to share stories of early times, with a strong mixture of our gratitude to our God and to our country that has so bountifully provided for this family.

Surely, Andrew Ginocchio's has been a charmed life. He began his trade making parts for wagon wheels, and saw the day he produced a part for Bill Lear's Lear Jets. He had the great fortune to be a witness to, or participate in, countless noteworthy events in history. Fate placed him on the train, in his duties in the U.S. Corps of Engineers, that carried the Germans and Americans to the signing of the Armistice, November 11, 1918. Knowledge acquired during World War I, in which he had the opportunity to work with Swedes, French, Belgians, and finally German prisoners in the forging and repairing of cannons and the construction of bridges, was invaluable in the construction of the Golden Gate Bridge. He received the Builders of the Golden State Award for his contribution to both the Golden Gate and Bay Bridge construction in the method used to camber the steel components. During World War II he trained over 1,000 American servicemen in welding techniques necessary to man the certified-welding stations building Liberty Ships. For over 30 years he volunteered to teach University of Nevada engineering students in welding, blueprint reading, and other hands-on skills. Countless of these students are successful business people, many

of whom he additionally helped financially throughout their schooling; his greatest reward has been their on-going success and friendship.

Ask Andrew, he'll tell you: where but in our unique corner of the world could a youth from North Italy have found success as a miner in Virginia City, and have established a Nevada family, now in its fourth generation? Where but in our state and nation could this family have been embraced, supported and encouraged to reach for the highest stars?

November 1986



ANDREW GINOCCHIO
1986

NEVADA ANTECEDENTS: GIOVANNI GINOCCHIO WITH THE CENTRAL PACIFIC AND ON THE COMSTOCK, 1863-1873

Andrew Ginocchio: My parents were born in north Italy, in Comuneglia di Varese Ligure, at that time in the county of Genoa. My dad, Giovanni Ginocchio, came to this country in 1864, when he was 17 or 18 years of age. Back in the old country, they tried to sneak out of there before it was time to go serve in the army. If you left the country after 18 years of age, it was like deserting the army, and you stood the chance of going to jail for desertion.

He came out; he was in the neighborhood of between 17 and 18 years of age when he came to the United States. He came in the company of a cousin of his, whose name was also Giovanni Ginocchio. They landed in San Francisco; from Genoa to San Francisco it took them 6 months out on the water.

When they landed in San Francisco, my father's cousin, being that he was a blacksmith by trade, found a job the second day after he landed [at a shop that later became the Union Iron Works]. My dad had no trade, and consequently was searching for a job...for anything to do to keep himself busy at work.

R. T. King: Where was your dad staying? Did he stay with any relatives or friends in San Francisco? Was there anybody for him to stay with when he came here?

No. He had to walk up toward North Beach, and he saw the name of an Italian on the front of a building, and he walked in, and he made himself at home.

He stayed in there till he found a job. He stayed in there about a week. It was an Italian restaurant and hotel.

Did he know anybody or have any relatives in San Francisco?

No, he didn't have a soul to go to. But he made up his mind at the time that if he'll ever get married and have a child and a family, that he would make his son a blacksmith, because his cousin got a job the second day and my dad was walking the streets! [laughter] So, when, 10 years later, after he went back to the old country and he got married, and I happened to be the first one of 6 children

in the family, then he sure enough made a blacksmith out of me when I was still going to school. I had half a day of school and the other half a day of working in the shop learning the trade as a blacksmith. I had 2 1/2 years work as a blacksmith before I came to this country. And then after I came here, I did have relatives in a blacksmith shop in Reno, and I got a job through them.

He landed in North Beach, and in some Italian restaurant they told him that people were looking for men to go to work for the Central Pacific Railroad. They were building up the railroad from Sacramento to Salt Lake City, Utah. He got a job, and he worked for them 5 or 6 years. [Construction of the Central Pacific commenced in 1863. The rails were joined with those of the Union Pacific at Promontory Point, Utah, 10 May 1869.—ed.]

Do you know what he was doing? In what capacity was he working?

First he was sent to help unload a railroad engine which had arrived on an English ship. He was a general helper (common laborer) but after he got onto it, he became a cook. For the next 3 or 4 years he was a cook. On Thursday of every week he was giving an Italian food with spaghetti and different Italian..., so he became quite famous among the gang, for the reason that they had to eat Chinese dishes. Since he was able to produce an Italian dish, why, he was quite welcome to be a cook. [laughter]

As a laborer, he began laying track in. They had a bunch of men to lay 30- or 40-foot rail, and they had to all pack it by hand and get it in place and nail it down so that they make a railroad. But there was a gang ahead of him that were cutting down trees, and there were engineers that would design the location, the heights, and so on and so forth, of the railroad

to be built, you understand. He would tell me that in the summertime, from Sacramento up on top of the hills [the Sierra Nevada] that they had to have a fire through the night to keep the wild animals away—the lions and all kind of wild animal that would come and eat everything that they can get ahold of.

So there was a gang each night that would stay up for the night to watch...to keep a fire burning and to watch so that the animal don't get in. However, in the summer he said that they were sleeping outside in their blanket, and the snake...they would crawl right alongside of it; when they wake up in the morning, they found a snake and sometimes 2 of them in the blanket rolled up with them. He said they didn't like the looks of it; they didn't like the idea of having a snake, but if you didn't harm them, they didn't hurt you.

Was he working with other Italian laborers?

Oh, yes, there was other Italians. There was all nationalities there—the Chinese, most of them. The majority of the people that was working there was Chinese people. But they had all sorts of nationalities—German, French and Swedes and Spaniard and Mexican. He thought it was almost every nationality in the country, there was somebody there.

Was he learning to speak English at that time?

Well, he was learning through the associating with the people that he had to work with. They had a key man that was... understand English and explain to them in Italian to do a certain job. But he was quite eager and anxious to learn the language the best he can by working with others.

And he had other Italian friends with him, I take it?

Yes.

Did he talk to you about when they got over the summit, finally and reached Nevada?

Oh, yes. Well, when they got to Reno...at that time Reno hasn't any name yet. However, he discovered that there was a country road that was coming in north and south and east and west. And he said at that particular time that someday—since they're building a railroad—at that crossroads there may be a town.

The officials of the Central Pacific, when they got to this point in Nevada, they were selling lots for \$100 apiece. But they were not taking any money outside of gold; you had to pay \$100 in gold, and you can have a lot. My dad was anxious to have a lot all right, but he didn't have the gold; he had the currency, and he had the silver that they give to him—once a month he would receive pay. They were not spending any money because they were eating along with the railroad as they would travel. So they were working 7 days a week from sunup to sunset for one dollar. And at that, he had enough money to buy a lot, but, as I say, he didn't have the gold. He had the money in currency and silver, but he couldn't buy it because he didn't have the gold. But those that was able to buy lots, they were buying lots in that railroad crossing for \$100 per lot.

Did he know any other people who bought a lot there?

Oh, yes, he knew a lot. There was some Italians.... See, most of the people that bought were German people. He said the German had managed to get ahold of the gold somehow or other. They bought most of the lots. And the Chinese, they bought very few. Well, he said that it was in a minority like all the rest of the

people that...if they did have the money, they didn't have the gold, so they couldn't buy the lot to start with.

Did your father talk to you at all about meeting Indians while building the railroad?

Oh, yes. Some of the Indian, they were looking for a job; they were looking for money, you know, to.... The common Indian, they were looking for a job. But the big chiefs, they didn't like to see the idea of building up a road. They felt as though whatever the white people were doing, they were stealing from them; that sooner or later they had to fight to chase the white people away, and that it was better to get rid of the white people before they got started...which at that day, in their own way, they might have had a point. However, he said that the working people—the ones that were looking for a job—they didn't have any trouble with those Indians. The Indians were willing to work with the white people.

Can you recall whether he was talking about Indians in California or in Nevada?

Well, they were at both sides. They were at California first, and then there was the Indian from Pyramid Lake. I remember he mentioned people that were from the Pyramid Lake in Nevada.

He did say Indians from Pyramid Lake were hiring on?

Yes, yes.

Did he tell you what sorts of things they would do? Were they common laborers?

They were common laborer—pick and shovel.

Were they being paid the same amount as non-Indian people?

The pay was the same for everyone—a dollar a day for all of them, plus they had to feed them.

Five years my father worked for the Central Pacific. He was a laborer, but after a couple of years he turned out to be one of the cooks. Since the Chinese people were doing the cooking, they dictated terms, you might say—you would either starve to death or sign up with the Chinese. They were the kingpin. As far as the railroad was concerned, the Chinese people, they thought they owned the railroad.

There was a time when the workers had fights and they had arguments among themselves. They didn't fight the Chinese people, because there was too many Chinese to fight. You know, maybe there was half a dozen white people, and there was 20 or 30 Chinese. And you don't know...you start a fight with one; before the fight is over, how many Chinese are you going to have on your neck?

When they had the upper hand, how would they exercise that power? What would they get your father and other non-Chinese, to do?

Well, "you'll eat what we cook or else." And you can either eat it or get out, if you want to go look for a job someplace else. Now, when you talk about the job, there did have to be a superior somebody to either hire you or fire you. The Chinese had no right to fire you. However, they can make life so damned miserable for you, they can give you what they want....see fit for you to eat, so that you get so sick and tired that eventually you walk out on your own, because you don't care to eat any longer what the Chinese people give you. And that's what I mean, the Chinese people had the upper hand. They pretty much dictate their

own terms, or they starve you to death, or they give you what's left out of somebody else. They bring you to the point that you just as soon quit and get out than try to put up with them any longer.

My dad, as I said, he kind of decided he was with them in the first place, so that he could get his foot in. The people that was working there, they were fed up with Chinese food. He told them that he can cook some of the Italian dishes if they'd get behind him to let the big shots know that he can cook. So they didn't waste any time to let the people know that they got a fellow that could cook Italian meal. The first job that he had, he was only allowed to work on Thursday; that's when he was giving spaghetti and Italian dishes. And they became very taken up with his cooking, that they got behind him and they not only asked him to work on Thursday, but to be one of the cooks for his job. He learned, even through the Chinese, to cook different dishes besides the Italian dishes, but they were given the Italian flavor, especially when you use garlic and tomatoes and different peppers and so on and so forth, that he said that he became quite a famous cook; after a while, everybody likes him. And he was willing to work as a cook rather than to work out in the field to lay railroad ties.

Had he learned how to cook in the old country?

No, he never had any experience outside of what he learned from his mother when he was a young man! [laughs] But he did know how to cook spaghetti and different things, you know.

Was he paid the same as a cook as he was as a laborer?

Yes, they paid him the same as a cook—a dollar a day for everybody.

What did your father like to do in his time off when he was working on the railroad? Did he do any exploring?

Well, when he was on the railroad, they would just walk around maybe a mile, but that was as far as...they didn't do any exploring at the time.

Did he tell you anything about crossing the desert with the railroad?

Well, he said the worst thing that they had was the wind blowing—practically 12 months out of the year there was a windstorm. And there was a time that he said that you'd think there was a mountain standing in front of you, and the next day the sand would be blown out, and it was a flat; and then 2 days later it'd be a mountain again. And he said that this was kind of a mysterious affair for him to understand—that the land would blow to the point to build up a mountain and disappear overnight. But this apparently was a severe desert, very severe.

I'm curious as to what your father was doing with his wages. Was he saving them? Was he sending them back to Italy?

No, all the time that he was working for the railroad, he didn't have a chance to get mail or to send mail because there was no postal service. And whenever they were paid money, they were given a check, and it was cashed. They'd get silver and paper; he was carrying it in his pocket. And like one day in Sacramento...there was bankers in Sacramento, and they were cashing checks to the post office. They were getting money in a larger city like Sacramento and San Francisco and Oakland. But there was no place in Nevada that could cash a check. He

had checks that he carried for 6 months in his pocket; he never cashed it until he got to Salt Lake City.

Once he cashed the check, did he send the money back to Italy, or did he keep it in this country?

No, he was keeping it to himself. He never mentioned any time to send any money anywhere. No.

Did he tell you anything about the joining of the 2 railroad lines? Was he present when the...?

That was a great affair. That was like a celebration day when the 2 railroads made connection. Near Salt Lake City there was a particular spot that I don't remember the name now [Promontory Point] that they'd driven a gold spike. There was a spike that was made in the San Francisco mint, and it was taken up to Salt Lake City.

Was your father there when the gold spike was driven?

Yes, yes.

Tell me what he told you about that day.

There was a great celebration when the 2 companies made connection. The big officials that were in charge of the project of the railroad system, they became quite friendly with the working people as well. And that was a great state of affair, a big doing. The last thing they did, when the 2 railroads made connection, they'd driven that golden spike, which was made in San Francisco through the mint. And from there on the people got their check, and they got dispersed, and that's when my dad moved from Salt Lake City to

Virginia City and went to work in the mining. The mining...their day's pay was \$4 a day for 8 hours, while for the railroad it was from sunup to sundown for \$1!

How did your dad get to Virginia City?

Well, after they made the railroad connection, they had cars, so they were taking people from place to places. Anyone that worked for the railroad was given free pass to go to the near points—like those in Sacramento Valley, they were taken to Sacramento on the railroad expense. They were given even food and money to get to the place where they want to be discharged.

Where did your father want to be discharged?

In Virginia City.

So he didn't even go back to San Francisco to see the Italian community there or anything?

No. After he got discharged from the railroad, my father wanted to go to Virginia City to work in the mine. They had heard about paying \$4 a day. It was sticking in his craw that if he can get on that \$4 a day for 8 hours, that that actually would be something worth trying to get, and which he got by trying.

Did he tell you how he got hired? What happened the first day he got to Virginia City? Did he ever tell you about that?

No. It seemed that there was a lot of Italians there. He mingled with the Italian people, but he had no trouble to find a job, as they were looking for workers. And this Italian restaurant and hotel, they were putting up lodging and feeding him 3 meals a day.

And he had no trouble when he land in Virginia City as far as speaking the language; he said you could speak Italian any place, and they understand what you want, what you're saying. [chuckling]

Which mine did he go to work for?

There was a mine that they used to call the C & C mine—he worked for it. Apparently it was the biggest mine in Virginia City at the time. [Various sources refer to the C & C mine as either the California & Consolidated Virginia or the Consolidated Virginia & California. The Consolidated Virginia purchased part of the California in 1874, but it is uncertain when this combination first received the appellation C & C.—ed.] There was the Comstock; there was El Dorado; there was many different mines with different names. But Virginia City's biggest mine, that was the C & C mine. And they had a frame, which even in the latest years, the frame was still standing. It was a great big plank structure affair up in there, and there was a great big cast-iron wheel with the cable that was going down in the mine up and down. I think it was one of the last pieces of machinery dismantled out of Virginia City; it was there even in 1930.

What was his first job at the C & C?

He was working down in the shaft like all the rest of the miners—just pick and shovel, digging gold. They had the engineers, the different ones, to tell them which direction to work. They had magnets, they had mercury to tell which direction to go where the gold was. Or, there was iron as well as silver in different directions, but they had engineers to tell them to dig in this direction, and they had machinery to test each place that indicate where the metal was.

Did he tell you what a working day was like down there? Can you recall what he might have told you and describe to me what a day beneath the earth was like at the time that he was working for the C & C?

No, there isn't anything that I can remember of when he was down in the shaft. He said that there were 4 and 6 and 8 men in a bunch, you know. Sometime they were digging in the rocks, and 2 men would work, and 4 were resting; then the 2 men, they rest, and then the other 2...they were sort of working around in so many hours a shift. But they work on the hard rocks. He said that there was a time that he didn't see for the life of him that there was anything coming out of those rocks, but he said eventually they were producing gold.

Were the men on his crew other Italians?

You know, the majority of the working men there was Italian and Mexican and Swedes. But the German people, they were more connected with the higher up, like the engineer. They knew which way to dig to pick up the better rock, to pick up the better mineral. And the main engineer, he said they were German people—the one that actually pointed out which way to do the digging. And he said they were very fine people to deal with. They were very white; they were not driving slaves. He said that they were very good people to work for. There was a time that they even get in and they taking a pick and they do a little digging themselves just to see if they were in the right direction, if they were digging the right kind of a rock. He said that he became very fond of the German people to working shoulder to shoulder down in the mine, in the shafts.

How many years was he at Virginia City?

He was up there 4 years or a little better. At that time he had made a little money, and he decide to sort of retire and go back to the old country. That's when he got married.

Was your father a religious man? Did he belong to the Catholic church?

Well, yes. Back there in Italy, there's no other religion but Catholic, and they make you Catholic whether you're knowing it even or not. But he wasn't very religious; he didn't go to the church. [laughs] He was a Mason.

Shortly after he got to Virginia City he learned that if he belonged to the particular branch of a club or society, particularly the Catholic church, they shaking you up for money. They want donation; they want hands out. And there were priests, sometime, they put themselves at the end of the tunnel and when you come out, the first thing they ask, "Well, how much do you want to donate to the church?" And he said he suddenly turned cold against the religious part. He got to the point that he said that he was not a Catholic in the first place! [laughter]

Did he belong to any social clubs?

No, no, no. Although he said that they had a club—I don't remember the name now—but there was a typical miners' club, you know, that was sort of a lodge hall like a union hall that you gather in there for social time and serving beer. It seemed that particularly the German beer was the main kind of a drink that you can have—a very large glass of beer for a nickel.

Were there any places in Virginia City where Italians would gather on their time off?

Yes, there was. Like I said, it looked like those were the places where the priests would hang around for hands out...he stayed away as much as he can; he didn't like to have to meet any face to face, to have to turn them down. And he said that he had to work like all the rest of them to make a dollar; that he didn't see fit to hand it out free of charge because somebody has a church or is connected with a church. So as far as religion was concerned, he said that he turned kind of cool.

The other large Catholic group up there was the Irish. Did your father tell you anything about the Irish?

He said the Irish, they're very religious. He said that the Irish people—some of them—they would give a half of their paycheck. He said some of those Irish, they were so.... He said they had a long talk with these Catholic priests; that the Catholic priests were wise enough to get ahold of those Irish and get their money, regardless of how the outcome was for the men. Maybe sometimes they run short of money, but they would have plenty to give to the church donation. He said the Irish people, they were very generous, and so was the Mexican and the Spaniard—some of the Spaniards, he said, not all of them. Some [chuckling], they came wise, he said, that they would stay away. But these priests, they had people that could mingle with them, you know, to try to talk them out of the money.

Did your father get along well with the Irish people?

Very well, yes. My dad was a good mixer. He didn't have any trouble to get along with anyone, even with the Indian. [chuckles]

What did he tell you about Indians up at Virginia City? Did he talk about their presence there?

The Indian people, they were not so welcome in a mining town.

Why?

Well, for some reason, the Indians had in mind that whatever they were picking out of there, it was stealing from them. The Indians were not in favor to have any miners up there, and the Indians were not given a job in the mine. Even though the Indian would try to get into the mining camp, the people that had charge, they would not hire an Indian. They were the last people to consider. Even to work on the outside, the Indian had no foothold in Virginia City.

Of course, there were small groups of Indians camped around Virginia City. Did your father tell you about them or what they might have been doing?

Well, they were more or less like a janitor worker, like working on the outside of a hotel, trying to keep the place clean, or dishwashers or stuff of that sort. They were hired by the white people. But as far as go to work in the mine, he never saw an Indian working in the mine; he never did see one, to work down in the shaft in the mine.

He said that some among the white people, instead of getting married, they were living with the Indian. But it was like you see today in this city of Reno, that boys and girls at the university live together; they're not married. However, if a white man would live with an Indian, they would just agree to live with each other; the white man would take care of the woman, but as far as getting

any pay, the Indian...they were not getting hardly any pay to speak of. No. [No Indian prostitution.]

Did they marry the Indian women?

No, he didn't know of anyone that they would marry an Indian woman. He didn't know of anybody.

What would they do with the Indian children? The women would have children by the white men, wouldn't they?

Well, there was some of the people, but I did not get to that point to get any light in that direction. I'm not really in the position to give any particular instance. My father never talked about that.

And I never did find out about my father and women. He never told me! [laughs]

That's a long time....

But there was white women...there was prostitutes up in Virginia City, where they had their own home. You pay a dollar and get what you want, and that was the end...the beginning and the finish, all of it. [chuckles] Prostitution was in Virginia and Carson City, in every town in Nevada from that time on. And they were making money. Even when it got down in 1930 in Tonopah and Goldfield, there was a man by the name of George Wingfield in Reno, that was like... he was not a mayor, but he was more than a mayor; he was like the governor, you might call it. He had banks and he had prostitutes, and these prostitutes would learn from the miner where the gold mine was. And they would find out, more or less, which place it was, and the next day they'd tell George Wingfield where he should buy stock...where

the gold was, that the prostitute learned from the miner the night before. George Wingfield was taking care of those prostitutes, and they were well taken care of, financially and home and society and so on and so forth, through George Wingfield's doing.

Where did you learn this?

Well, I learned from different...after I land here myself in Reno, and I learned from day by day as you go along, in places of my own line of endeavor. I hear people talk about it.

Did your father ever say anything about the miners' union?

Well, you practically had to be a member of the union if you wanted a job to start with. You had to pay \$100 to join the union, and from there on it was like a brotherhood affair. The union would fight your battle if it's necessary, but he said they never had got to a point to have any strikes or have any union difficulties. There was only one union, and you had to be a member of the union if you wanted to be a miner. He had no trouble with the union, and he had no trouble as far as working conditions. The 8 hours was to work in days and 6 days a week, Sunday off. The condition was very satisfactory all the way through.

The restaurant where they were serving meals, they were serving them good meals, too. They would give plenty—all that you can eat. Some of those Italian places, they had a long table. It was like a family affair that every 4 persons there was given one quart of wine or one quart of beer. You can have beer if you want with your meal, or you can have wine. And the living condition was very good. He said that was the best he ever had all the time he was in the United States. He didn't have

any complaint about the meals or about the working conditions.

He didn't complain about the safety conditions in the mine either?

No, no, no.

Very often the miners' union did find fault with some of the mines.

Well, he said if somebody'd had his nose out of joint, that they were complaining and bellyaching about things that they had no business to complain about. He says it just was some kind of fellow that would travel in reverse; that they were not satisfied with what you give them, what you're doing. But they had their open chance—if you didn't like the condition, you can walk out. You were not compelled to stay there unless you want to.

Was he there when Virginia City burned in the great fire of 1875?

That was later. He had left by that time.

[While he was in Virginia City] they were exploring around. Particularly, they were hunting. You know, those days there was all kind of a wild animal that you can shoot—birds as well as turkey, and there was any kind of animal that you find up in the hill, they had no trouble to pick up. There was lion...kill a lion and sell it to the restaurant people.

They were eating lions? Mountain lions?

Oh, yes, they were eating mountain lion; they would eat all sorts of wild animal, yes. He said the hardest part was to pack them, for they were kind of heavy. From the place where they did the killing to getting to Virginia City,

it was kind of a chore to pack them on their back, you understand.

From time to time he was going down to what they call now Reno. At that time the first building that was put up at this crossing was the Riverside Hotel. A man by the name of [Myron C.] Lake put up the bridge, and every time that anyone wanted to cross that bridge, he had to pay 10¢. That was the fare for any individual to cross the river. However, in the summer when the water was low, they had in the river stone laid up so that the person can jump from one rock to the next to cross the river. And he was telling this; that there was a time some of the women, they were so hard up for money that they would pull their dresses up to their knee and jump on the rocks like the men did, from one to the next, to cross the river. And the men, they were standing up on the river bank to watch the ladies with their dress up to their knee, because in those days the lady had long dress clear down to their shoes! [laughter]

Anyone that had a team of horses, they had to pay \$1 to cross the Lake Street bridge to go anywhere. If you used the bridge, you had to pay \$1 for it. Supplies were coming in, particularly from north Nevada; they were bringing in lumber and meat to go to Virginia City. They were coming in from the north to go to Virginia City. And each one of those teams—if they had more than 2 horses, the price was \$2. If it was just one horse and the wagon, it was \$1, and if they had 4 horses, it was \$4 to cross the river.

Your father saw all these things? He told you about these...?

He saw, he saw.

They had Sunday off, and they were going out to explore in different directions. He was very much fond of the ford...the crossing in

Reno. He made many trips from Virginia City to Reno just to see the lay of the land. He was still inclined to have liked to buy some of the lots. However, the price...that was no longer \$100 per lot; it went up overnight to over \$200 a lot.

He was talking about the Indians, that they were carrying their babies on their shoulder, on their back. You know, they had those baskets that they were.... As a rule, the man was sort of the chief, like, but the woman, she was the underdog. She not only had to pack the baby, but they sometimes had to pack the bedding and the different kind of stuff that they had to carry. The woman was the horse of the family, while the man was acting as the chief. He might go ahead and see what the lay of the land is, or which way to cross the river to go to California. But the main object was that the lady was the underdog, and the man was the chief of the family—the Indian.

Was there any form of entertainment for miners here at Lake's Crossing?

At the time those German people were building a dance hall up in Virginia City. And this dance hall had a spring underneath that, when you danced, the floor itself would go up and down just like the spring on a wagon. They say that when you ride on a wagon with a spring, it would give a little up and down; so was the dance hall built on those terms, under those conditions.

Do you remember the name of the dance hall?

No. He might have mentioned it, but I didn't remember it.

Well, can you remember anything else about Lake's Crossing or about the area down here

that became Reno? What else did he tell you about this area?

Well, this man, Lake, apparently was just like an Indian chief; he really had the upper hand. He would dictate to everybody that come across, regardless of which way they went, that he was the kingpin, you might call it. He was the chief of the place, and there was nobody could cross the bridge, unless they would pay the 10¢ or whatever they had. There was no one to get across on the bridge free of charge—none of that. And it seemed as though there were some hard-core nuts in those days, some tough characters, used to go up to Virginia City. But regardless of how tough they were, this man, Lake, wasn't giving up to anybody. Sometimes he had to have a gun, point the rifle at somebody's chest, but he didn't kill anyone. However, he scared them to death.

You said your father on Sundays liked to go out and explore and see the lay of the land.

Not only him, but many of his associates that he was working with. The main place to go to explore was down in Reno and this Lake's Crossing, they used to call it. Shortly after they start to build homes and they start to make lots and give so many acres of land. The first governor that came across Nevada was a fellow by name Nye. I think he came from Salt Lake City. When the town got to be big enough, they made him the governor of the state. [James W. Nye was territorial governor of Nevada, 1861-1864. Giovanni Ginocchio entered the state with the Central Pacific in 1868, when H. G. Blasdel was governor.—ed.]

And from that time on, the people that was deeply interested in the mines...there were practical people in San Francisco, and

they decided to build a railroad, and it was the railroad to connect from Virginia City to the crossing in Reno. There were people who were coming here from San Francisco to Virginia City.

Did he ever tell you how he would get down from Virginia City? He would have probably come down to Reno by the V & T [Virginia & Truckee Railroad], wouldn't he?

The railroad was the best...see, in those days every 2 hours there was a train coming into Reno—a passenger train and a freight train, every 2 hours around the clock; even at 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning, there was a train coming in and a train going out of Reno. My dad and all the rest of the people who were up there were coming into Reno through the V & T Railroad. They had a passenger train, and the service was very good. You could go back and forth in the day and at night.

The town of Reno was actually growing up from Virginia City. A lot of the buildings that were set up in Reno, they either were financed from Virginia City, or some of the buildings that there were in Virginia City were brought into Reno. I know some of the buildings. Like on Chestnut Street across the railroad toward the university, there was a 3-story building. Right offhand I don't remember the name, but I think that some of the building still stands up today in Chestnut Street. Now they call it Arlington, but in those days it was Chestnut. And actually, Reno was built up by the gold that came down from Virginia City.

Did your father tell you anything about what Carson City was like in the 1870s?

Well, Carson City was the capital of the state. And when you talk about law or lawyers and doctors and so on and so forth,

the headquarters was in Carson City. But he wasn't a politician; he wasn't too concerned with what was going on in Carson City.

Did he ever go down to Carson City?

Oh, yes. He said that there was a time that rather than take the trip to Reno, they would take a trip to Carson, which wasn't too far away from Virginia City. He was pretty well familiar with Carson City, also Genoa. Genoa was one of the first towns that actually was promoted by the Mormon religion from Salt Lake City. He found out that when they were going to Genoa, the name was taken off of the same Genoa County that he was born and raised in Italy, and he felt a lot like there was a family tie to go to Genoa. He always said it was a good farming place, that there was good land, and there were large farmers that had great big herds of stock—sheep and cows and horses and so on and so forth.

Genoa was just a small place of about half a dozen residents, you might call it. He said that they had rich land up in the hills, and they had flat land, and they had plenty of water from the snow that melted through the summer, and they were raising stock down there. That's when these Dangberg brothers and different ones settled and got hold of the land and raised farming. And he said that on many different occasions, particularly in Genoa, that at that time they didn't have to have gold; you can buy a piece of land at your price. He said that many settled, and he had the [idea] to settle in there, too, at one time, but the job that he had was too good to quit. So he stayed with the mine at \$4 a day.

Did he tell you if there were any Italian families living down around Genoa at that time?

He didn't mention any Italians being there, but he did mention there was a lot of German people there. There was a lot of German people.... Actually, the settlers were of Mormon descent, although there were German descent people that settled there to start with.

Carson Valley, where Genoa is, was supplying a good deal of the food for the Virginia City mines. Did your father tell you anything about that connection between Carson Valley and Virginia City?

No, he hardly mentioned Carson Valley to me at any time.

Did he go to Genoa because of its name?

On account of its name. He said that he liked Genoa, and a few families that were there—they were very good people to mingle with. They welcomed you to their home, and keep you like if you was a member of the family. And whenever you leave, they want you to return. He says many times that he felt that instead of going back to work in the mine, to stay there; he was satisfied that he could have got a job as a farmer, but he didn't see fit to make the change.

Now, you've already told me that there were a great number of Italians working in the mines in Virginia City. There were other Italians in Nevada at that time who were not miners. Did your father ever tell you about anything that other Italians were doing?

Well, those that were not in the mining game, they were farmers. There was people who would lease or engage themselves, even to work for wages in a farm, and they would work the whole summer and fall of the year

for a dollar a day with the understanding that through the wintertime, when they're not able to do any work, they would be fed 3 meals a day and stay in a farm. They would take care of the cow or feed the animal—horses and whatever they have. But many Italian people, they would stay with the farmer all year around, with the understanding that they would still get a dollar a day in the wintertime and fed just to take care of the animal.

Did your father tell you about this?

Yes, my dad told me about this.

Your father, while he was on the railroad, worked and associated with a lot of Chinese people. Did he tell you anything about Chinese people in Virginia City?

Well, the Chinese people in Virginia City was a different story than what they had with the railroad. With the railroad, they had the upper hand because they were the cooks, but in Virginia City they turn out to be like the dishwashers. They were not the kingpin any longer. They were taken in like a second place.

Who were the cooks?

Well, they had white people; they had the women cook, and they had a white generation—they didn't have many Chinese. There was some Chinese restaurants that you can go, and they cook their own meal in Chinese style. But as far as the Chinese having any hands on the miners, there were not. The Chinese took second place, when you talk about Virginia City and the Chinese people. And the same thing took place in Carson City. They had Chinese restaurants, but the white people, they had the upper hand. They were the major hotels and the major restaurants,

and the Chinese people were coming in second.

In Virginia City the Chinese were dishwashers; they were doing janitor work, and they were taking care outside—like a hotel that had something green, and had some flowers and had trees, something they were cultivating outside the hotel. The Chinese people, they would take care of that. They were doing sort of second-class work, you might say, as far as... they were not leaders in their line of endeavor any longer. They had to take what they get.

You were telling me earlier about a dance hall at Virginia City that had a spring floor on it.

Yes. They had a dance hall, and it was built by German people. I think the name was Becker. Becker was actually the leading mechanic to build this dance hall. He had it on springs, and as men and women would get out on the floor to dance; the more there was, the more ups and downs the floor was giving. You were not only dancing, but you were flying, you might say! [laughter]

Tell me something about those dances. Did he tell you what kind of music was being played? Was it German or Italian or...?

Oh, well, it was some of all of them, but the German had the upper hand. The German had their own waltz...I forgot the name; he mentioned some of the names that they were dancing.

The ladies those days was wearing long dresses. When they get to a certain place that they were going around, you know, their skirt was taking a long swing. I've seen the picture myself of the dances that were given in Virginia City in that particular dance hall. There was actually amusement to see men

and women out in the hall dancing, and the musicians were German; they were singing German songs, particularly. Offhand I don't remember, but....

But you get the impression it was German, and not Italian or something else?

Yes, very much so, yes.

You mentioned a photograph. Did your father bring any photographs back to Italy?

Yes, my dad had some photographs. I never got to see them after I left there, but he did have some of the pictures of the railroad that they were building. And he had some photos of animals that they were killing. Before daylight in the morning, some of those wild animals were making approach to jump at the white people. And that's when they were ready to shoot, and in some cases they shoot a lot. They shoot lion, tigers and wolves; and I don't know, different....coyotes and.... And sometimes they would skin them and eat them for their meal. My dad cooked some of those wild animals.

At Virginia City, he would go out on Sunday and.... Well, there was no Sunday—those days they were working day in and day out, but at any time they could take a day off. There was no trouble. If tomorrow looks to be a nice day, they would ask them to take a day off; they were willing to let them have it. Some of them would go out, and it seemed as though the lion was the main thing that they liked to shoot; it seemed as though the lion meat was more wanted by the white people than other animal. But he was cooking the wild animal. [The "lion" in question is the western mountain lion. —ed.]

Did he have his own gun?

Oh, yes, he had a double-barrel shotgun and a rifle both.

Was it mostly Italian men who were going out hunting, or was it everybody?

Oh, any nationality. Matter of fact, he said the German people, they're better hunter than the rest of them. The Swedes were good hunters, too. And when they get close to a river, they had a lot of fishermen. He said that there was a time when some of the people, particularly the Swedes, they would provide the cook with fish. My dad cooked a lot of fish, he says, when you get close to a river.

Did your father do any cooking up in Virginia City?

No. All the time that he was in Virginia City he was a miner.

When your father was in Virginia City, was he writing letters and sending them back to Italy?

Not very much. As far as the correspondence, I never heard of him receiving a letter or writing a letter, sending a letter to anyone.

What led your father to leave Virginia City?

Well, it was kind of a struggle for him to make ends meet when he was only getting a dollar a day on the railroad. He had saved a little money, but hardly to make ends meet, you might say. And he thought that he struck it rich when he was able to get a job at Virginia City at \$4 a day and a good place to live, so on and so forth. He was there either 4 or 5 years; I'm not too sure of the exact date. It was 1870s or something; I'm not sure.... He made a little money while he was working at

the mine, and he decided to go back in the old country. That's when he got married, and that's when I came.

Did he tell you how he got back to the old country? Did he cross the United States by rail?

He crossed the United States by rail. The only difference is, he says, that when he came to the United States it took him 6 months by water, and when he went back, it took him 7 days to cross the ocean. He says that from New York to France, and then from France to Italy by railroad, it took him 7 days to cross the water.

How much money did he bring back with him? Did he tell you?

He never did tell me; I never knew. But I did know that he had a belt...they had a sort of double string affair, and he had a \$20 gold piece in his belt. And he had a belt that was like the low tunnel with \$20 and the upper tunnel with \$20, and he had this belt full. He carried it all around his waist all the time he traveled, and it was full of \$20 gold pieces. How many there was, I don't remember now. I did count them some time ago, but I don't remember.

He was from Comuneglia di Varese Ligure. And the house that he built in 1888, where I was born, is still there to this day. The Ginocchio family is still in that to this day.

He had 2 sons. I'm the one that came here and remained here, but the second son came to Sacramento, and later returned to Italy. My dad had a grocery store, and the second son stayed with him all through his life, and then he took over. The second son has children of his own now. And same house is still there today, and they still carry it on the same as my dad did in his early days.

LEARNING THE BLACKSMITH TRADE IN ITALY AND RENO, 1893-1912

My mother's maiden name was Maria Rossi. And she married my dad after he landed back in Italy...a couple of years later and start to build himself a home. He built a home out of stone, a 2-story house, and it's still up today, which his grandchildren has it. And he had a grocery store, from which he supplied the town with food and whatever the necessity was at the time, and they still have it to this day.

Now, what sort of a family did your mother come from?

Well, she came from a regular family that lived in the town, which, you might say, was among the better class. The Rossi family, they had a village all of their own. The whole village was made up of Rossi people. I'm not saying that they were politicians, but they were sort of...oh, sort of dictators. They were seeing who's coming, who's going, whether a stranger was accepted or whether he was rejected. The Rossi people, I don't know where their wealth came from, outside of having...each one of the

family, they had their own home, and they had from one to 5 acres of land of their own. And some of them, they were cultivating trees and flowers, and others had grain and corn and stuff of that sort. But it was quite a large family, and it was quite a village, and the whole family was Rossi people.

What did your mother's father do for a living?

They had a piece of land. They were producing corn and hay and wheat—farming like. They had 5 acres of land.

How old was your mother when she married your father?

I think she must have been—I'm only making a guess—25, I would say.

And your father was older?

My father was 20 years older.

Was your mother educated?

Well, in those days they had a grammar school, and it was compulsory by law that each child was supposed to have a grammar school education. It was compelled by the law that each child was supposed to go to school. There was a time in the early days that some of those children were sent up in the hills to herd a bunch of animals—cows—and they go up in the morning and come home at night, without an education. But a certain time, a certain age...I'm not familiar with which year it might have been, but there was a king that was in charge of everything in Italy, and he put out a law that every girl or boy, at the age of 6, supposed to go to school until he's 16. It was compulsory. And for someone who sends a boy or girl up in the hills to herd a bunch of animals and didn't receive an education, the head of the family were punished. And they also were taxed for the land that they had, that were raising so many ton of hay or potatoes, whatever they had to raise—they had to pay tax to support the government. My dad and mother were both educated through that kind of a law to have an education.

You were born on 29 June, 1893, is that correct?

Yes, yes.

How long had your mother and father been married? How many years before you were born?

Oh, I think it was more than 5 years when I was born.

So your father had spent quite a bit of time back in Italy before they got married? He came back to Italy probably around 1875, at the latest, didn't he?

That's right.

And he and your mother got married in the late 1880s, would you say?

Well, from what I've heard from their conversation, they were married a few years when I was born.

So your father had had time to build a business, then?

Yes.

Was your father's father a grocer?

My [paternal] grandfather was an animal doctor, veterinarian. In that particular time there was a lot of farming, and he was able to make a living by taking care of the animals, whether it was horses, cows or anything.

Of course, I left when I was 17; I didn't know too much about the conditions, but from putting 2 and 2 together, I think Grandfather was a pretty well-liked man all through the town by being able to take care of the animal. Sometimes it looked like they were breaking their legs; and he was able to take a horse with a broken leg and put it back together, and in the course of time it'd get to be so it could run like all the rest of the horses.

I'm curious as to what your parents had in mind for you. All parents have expectations for their children. Can you recall what they expected you to become?

I think I mentioned early...when my dad came to San Francisco with this fellow John Ginocchio, and John Ginocchio found a job the next day because he was a blacksmith, my dad made up his mind at the time that if he'll ever have a son, that he'd make him a blacksmith, which turned out to be me! [laughter]

When did you begin your blacksmith training?

When I was going to school, I had a half a day in the grammar school, and half a day work in the shop. From 8:00 to 12:00 it was in the school, and from 12:00 to 1:00 we had an hour off, and from 1:00 to 4:00 I was working in the shop as a blacksmith helper.

How young were you when you started?

I had it 4 years. I left when I was 17, and you take 4 years off of 17...it was about 12.

Twelve, 13 years old when you began the apprenticeship?

Yes, yes.

Did you have any desire to be anything else?

No. After I came here, I saw a lot of these fellows that immigrate...they come to Nevada and they had to take what they get because they had no trade. I said to myself, "I guess I was lucky to have a trade to start with." I had that advantage over many other fellows.

In the early days—I was still going to school—my dad said to me one day, "You'll have to make up your mind after you graduate from grammar school what you're going to do next. You'll either have to use your head, or you have to use your muscle." And I didn't know hardly what he meant by use my muscle, and he says, "Well, if you go to school, you can become a doctor; you can become a lawyer, and you can become different things by study. You can become a professor. Or else you'll have to use your muscle. You'll have to learn a trade." He says, "You can become a carpenter; you can become a cement man; you can become a blacksmith, and you can become something else." But with the experience that

he had in the past years, he kind of suggested the idea to save it to blacksmith. So, that's what I turned out to be.

But in the early days, any family back in the old country, after you leave grammar school, you had to make up your mind what you're going to do. Half of the time you had to learn a trade of some kind. And I had that experience in the latest years—say, 1960, 1965. Time was kind of tough here in Reno. One Saturday night, ready to close up the shop, a man come to me. He had about probably 75¢ on his hand, and he had a little girl about 5 or 6 years old and a wife; the wife wasn't with him. He showed to me the 75¢. He said, "This is all there is between me, this little girl and my wife and starvation." And he says, "I come to you for help."

I look at him in the eye, and I says, "Who sent you to see me?"

"Oh," he says, "they tell me that you're the boss of this place; that's why I'm here."

And I said, "Suppose that I help you, how long do you expect me to help you?" I says, "I have a family of my own to take care of." And I says, "What makes you think that I had to help you? I might be able to supply your dinner for you, and I send you to the Salvation Army to see that you get lodging, and they might give you breakfast, but," I says, "sooner or later they tell you to get out on your way." I says, "If you had an education in the early days like I had, that I had to learn a trade of some kind, today you wouldn't be here to ask me with 75¢ on your hand that you want me to help you." I says, "If you were a carpenter, if you were a cement man, you should be able to go out where they're building a house and find a job. As it is, you have no trade, but you do have a family to take care of, and you couldn't take care of yourself."

It came to me, what my dad told me—that I had to use either my muscle or my head, one

of the 2. Something has to be coming out of you. And it'd be better today, right now, some of these kids that falling off with school, that go out on their own...they're going to get rich, and they got many different ideas, but eventually, they end up try to raise a family without any money. It would be better if somebody told them, when they were going to school, they'll either learn to be somebody or learn a trade of some kind.

What sorts of things did you learn as a blacksmith's apprentice, and how did you go about doing it?

Back in the old country, they educated young people—men as well as women—to learn a trade of some kind. For the women it referred more or less to the hotel and office work and something of that sort. For the men, roughly speaking, you talk about like the blacksmithing, carpenter, cement men, and anything that has to do with hard labor. That goes up until the end of the grammar school. Then, when you get into high school, you had to make up your mind, more or less, which line of endeavor that you choose besides learning the regular education that they serve. And in my case, my dad kind of got into my mind that I should be a blacksmith. Of course, he was speaking from the past experience that he had with the cousin of his that landed a job the second day in San Francisco. And then my dad didn't have any trade; he didn't have any job! [chuckles] But anyway, it was impressed on my mind that since he kind of thought that I should be a blacksmith, that I would go for it. And I started from there.

However, after I was in learning from the shop work, the man that was teaching passed away on account of his age (he was 76 years of age), and it left me out on a limb; we didn't

have an instructor. And that, with the idea of not having to serve or register for military service, I came to the conclusion that I would come to this country and get away from the chance I would have to go in the army for 4 or 5 years.

What did you plan to do when you got to this country? Did you intend to become a blacksmith?

Oh, yes, I did. I had some relatives that had a blacksmith shop in Reno, and I was promised a job before I got here through a letter, through mails.

How old were you when you left Italy?

Seventeen years old.

And you left in 1910, then? Is that correct?

Nineteen ten, yes. My birthday was on the twenty-ninth of June, and I left in May and arrived here on the fifth of June.

What were the names of the relatives who were...?

John Ginocchio. He was my fathers s first cousin; he was second cousin to me.

Is he the same John Ginocchio who came here with your father?

Well, this was the son.

And the father, John Ginocchio, had he remained in San Francisco?

Well, he passed away. Of course, he was in San Francisco when he passed away.

What was the name of the blacksmith shop that he had in San Francisco? Did he own one?

Well, the father was working for the...in the latest years, it turned out to be the Union Iron Works, but before then it was just a blacksmith shop in San Francisco.

And he passed away about what year?

I have no idea.

So his son, John Ginocchio, then came to Reno?

Yes.

Did he ever tell you approximately what year he came to Reno?

I wasn't concerned, particularly, and I don't think he ever mentioned it.

Did he ever mention whether he worked for somebody else after he came here, or did he start his own shop when he got to Reno?

No, he worked for somebody else when he was in San Francisco, and he also worked for a shop when he came to Reno. It was some Italian people that was connected with the shop. Their name was Vietti. [The shop was called the Vietti and Bottini Blacksmith Shop, and its address in Reno City Directories is variously given as 225, 237 or 245 Chestnut Street in the period 1912-1917. Chestnut Street has since been renamed Arlington.—ed.] Eventually, John Ginocchio bought half interest and finally became the whole owner. He changed the name to Reno Blacksmith Shop.

When you came here to Reno in 1910, did you live with John Ginocchio?

No, I didn't live with him. There was 2 hotels, and one of them was named the

Europa Hotel, and I stayed in this Europa Hotel. At that time they were serving meal 3 times a day, and the lodging place was on the top floor. There was a great big large room, and they had regular cots like you do in the army. You sleep one right alongside of the next, and so on and so forth. And when I made arrangement to stay there and they asked me how much money I was getting, I told them I was getting \$20 a month. He said, "Well, that's just the amount of money we get from these people that stay here. But," he says, "since you don't have any more than that, I'll make \$19 for you. you can have \$1 to buy yourself a glass of beer once in a while," he said to me! [laughter] One dollar to amuse myself for 30 days!

Were there other Italian people staying at the Europa Hotel?

Oh, yes, there was a lot of them. There was a lot of them, particularly the lumberjacks, you know. In the fall of the year the lumberjacks coming into town, and they would stay in there until the spring when the lumber business open up. They would spend the winter.

You say that was over on Lake Street?

Yes. The hotel has been torn down now, but it was in there right alongside of the Toscano Hotel, which is still in there today.

Did John Ginocchio pay your passage over, or did you pay your own way to come to this country?

My dad paid my own way to come here. I didn't borrow any money from anyone; just my dad financed me the trip to come here.

Can you recall what the area around the Vietti and Bottini shop was like? Very often, in other communities where a blacksmith shop was, there would be bars and other areas where people could pass the time while their work was being done.

The difference between the normal condition...like a man that run a grocery store, he would try to be in the center of the town or have it in a nice location where the people was attracted to. The blacksmith shop, you go to the outskirts of the city and try to land a place where the land is not so expensive. If you had to rent it from somebody, or if you had to buy it, you didn't want to buy it in the heart of the city because the price was sky high. But if you go outside of the city limit, the cost of the land is not half as much. And in our case we never had to go out as long in the early days. We did afterward, but in the early days we stayed put in Chestnut Street at 234. And that was it; there was no spending any time to look for a different location.

Can you describe the neighborhood for me around that Chestnut Street shop?

There was working people that they had a job either with the grocery store, with some cement plant or lumber plant, or sometimes even out in farming. They were living in the city, and they would have their own home, but they would go to work for a farmer outside of the city. In the summertime and outside of winter, a lot of people from the city would go out and work in a ranch because they were spending their time and getting a little money for it and keeping themselves busy.

When you talk outside of the main street, like Virginia and Second streets—like from Fourth Street up to the university they used to call “up in the sagebrush.” When you talk

about the university, you talk about the house up in the sagebrush. That was way out of Reno, you might say. The university was, in the first place, placed in Elko. But then the politicians, they decided to bring it into Reno. Even after it was set in Reno, they still called it “up on the hill, up in the brush.” When you talked about “up in the brush,” that meant the University of Nevada.

What sort of things did your cousin have you doing in the shop?

Those days, the principal thing was repair wagon, buggy and 2-wheel carts. My job was to prepare the wheels to set the tire. These wheels, by running, they naturally get loose; they get out of shape, and the tire had to be reset, and the spokes had to be wedged so that they were tight instead of being wobbly. And my job was to get the wheel ready to set the tire. Then, after the tire was set, there was bolts to be put in between the steel and the wood to keep the steel band from getting loose or fall out of the wheel. My job was to assemble the tire, and if by any chance they had to put in any new spokes or fellow bands, my job was to paint the new wood so that they matched more or less with the original color, and get the wheel ready back on the buggy or wagon, whatever it was.

So you weren't working very much with iron, originally, then?

Well, then as a helper, no. But there's sort of a divide place in there: as long as you are a helper you got to stay on the outside of the anvil, and when you become what you might call a full-fledged mechanic, then you go on the right side of the anvil, and you tell the helper what to do. In my case I served about 2 1/2 years as a helper when I land here, and

then I was able to run the place...take care of the forge work and do the iron work just like any other mechanic attached to the line of endeavor; I had no trouble to pick up and carry on the work as it should be done. I turned out to be a fairly good mechanic. I'm not trying to brag about myself, but [chuckles] I was well liked by the people that I was working for.

The Vietti family was quite large. However, out of 4 or 5 children in the family, there was only one to carry out the old man's line of endeavor, and in the latest years he went to work for the city of Reno as a fireman. He was a fireman for a number of years, until he retire. The rest of the family all passed away quite early in life.

Was the Vietti family from Genoa?

No, they were from north Italy—the Piedmont district, they call it. Good people. Kindhearted, and they were the kind of people that just as soon invite you to have dinner with them, even though you're not, you might say, a close friend. I speak very highly of the people many times; even while we were working they would ask me to...about 4:00 in the afternoon to go to their home and have a snack and a glass of wine and chat probably 15 minutes. And when you go back in the shop and work, you feel more encouraged; you feel like you got somebody that really care for you. I speak very highly of the Vietti family. They were very, very kind people, and the young men and the young girls were very respectable people.

Can you recall approximately how many men were working in the shop when you first came?

Well, there was 2 of the Vietti family; there was John Ginocchio, and there was me

and.... There was more than 4 or 5 of us. In summertime, when they were the busiest, they might hire some stranger that come along and looking for work. They might hire them for 2 or 3 months or whatever they stay. But normally, they have the steady men, and I was one of the steady men that they kept all year round.

Were the steady men all Italians?

Yes.

Yes, you've told me a little bit about what your job was when you first came. Can you now tell me the sorts of things that the blacksmith shop in general was doing?

Besides repairing wheels and so on and so forth, sometimes they was also shoeing horses. And I had to pull the old shoe from the horse's foot, and kind of clean up the foot and get it ready so that the man that was making the new shoe, he would apply it to the foot and then fit it and so on, so forth. In other words, I was doing the dirty work, and when the regular man that did the shoeing was fitting the shoe and put it on, I was doing the finishing—kind of dressing up the hoof. Sometimes we'd have to give a quart of black paint if it was kind of a respectable man that was better than average; in order to please him, you'd give the foot a shot of black paint. [laughs] Like shine a man's shoes!

What was the principal source of business?

Repairing wagons, trucks and lumber trucks and so on, so forth. There was nothing else but truck vehicles. There was no automobiles in those days, not a single one. Not a single one in 1910. As a matter of fact, the first automobile that we saw in

Reno in 1910 was someone connected with Jim Jeffries that had to do with the Fourth of July fight. [Jack Johnson vs. Jim Jeffries for the world heavyweight championship.—ed.] There was some people came from California that they have an automobile, kind of an outstanding sport car, but there wasn't very many automobiles in Reno in 1910. As a matter of fact, there was only 7 automobiles.

On Labor Day, the miners from Virginia City used to come into Reno and put on a parade. And at one time in 1910 on Labor Day parade, they had 7 automobiles. There was the mayor, 3 doctors and 3 lawyers in Reno that had a car. All the rest of the common people and the farmers, they had 2-wheel carts and a horse. They had wagons—2 horses and a wagon—there was many of those. And the grocery store, those days, they were delivering groceries; they would make an early call to different families—their customers—pick up an order for what they want, and by 11:00 or 11:30 the wagon go back to the store with the order. They were making up the order as they received it, and in the afternoon, by 1:00 or 2:00, they were delivering groceries to all of the customers that they pick up and load early in the morning. Today it is a different story entirely. But those days, if they were a stable customer, they only pay the bill once a month. The grocery man would supply them with grocery, with whatever they call for, and within 30 days, if they're good people, they'd pay the bill. If it were a bad actor, well, you get to carry them, and if by any chance they move out of town, they didn't know where to go to find them. So that was lost. [chuckles]

Yes. Well, I'm trying still to get a little bit better understanding of who the principal customers were for the blacksmith shop. You've told me that you had a lot of business from the lumber people or the wood-cutting people.

Yes, yes. There were Italian lumber people—lumberjacks, they called them. In the spring of the year they used to come to the shop. We would fabricate a hatchet and sledgehammer. We were making a hammer that on one side was like a sledge, and the other side was like a wedge, you know? And we would supply them with \$100 worth of tools with the idea that they pay us after they get to work the first month or 2 up in the lumber camp. And whenever they come into town, they pay us for the tools that we built for them.

They were Italian people, and they were honest. When they're coming into town, they go to the bank and they cash their check, and the first thing they would do, they'd come to the shop and pay us for the tools that we built for them. And we would take care of them just the same as a farmer that we sharpened a plowshare for.

Now, this would have been in the period from 1910 to 1920, right around in there?

Yes. Well, as a matter of fact, they were doing it before I came here, as far as that goes—that kind of a habit was going on. I don't know when it started, but I'm only speaking from 1910 when I land in Reno until about 1920. And we were doing with lumberjacks the same as we did with the farmer. The only difference was that the lumberjack, when they're coming into town, they're coming in and pay you; the farmer only come to you once a year, and he pay you for what you did. If we set 4 wheels on a wagon or 2-wheel carts, or whatever it was, sometimes it was argued whether we strapped the tires on 2 wheels or 4 wheels. And sometimes those was clever enough to try to talk you into the idea that you only fixed 2 wheels instead of 4. They were kind of shrewd in their own way. We

were writing down when the job was done and who did the work and how many hours we put in—so on and so forth. But those guys, they thought they were smart enough to say that we only fix 2 wheels instead of 4.

Sometimes when we were shoeing horses, they'd tell us that we only shoed 2 horses instead of 4 or 5 or whatever it was. And sometimes, in order to settle you had to take a loss, even though we were not legally supposed to take it. But either they'd part in enemy terms or give up to them to compromise. And that was some of those farmers' idea that... to talk you out of something. They thought they made a gain, which they did, but there wasn't much to gain by! [chuckling]

The major place where they were cutting the timber was in Verdi. That town of Verdi was maybe 3 or 4 times larger than it is today. They had a sawmill up there; they used to call it the Verdi Lumber Company. They had quite a lot of people working in the sawmill, as well as cutting timber, as well as with the logging. They had heavy trucks to carry the logs. In some cases, when it was close to the river, they naturally would send down the logs through the water, but in some cases they had to haul it in trucks. Verdi Lumber had 3 or 4 large trucks that they were going up in the hills, and the logs.... And we were repairing the vehicles, and in some cases we'd take care of the axle; we'd take care of any part of the machinery that was required to carry the timber.

Were they your most important customer?

Yes. Well, they were the larger people... their work was going into hundreds of dollars, where in the other one was only \$4 or \$5 or maybe \$25. Theirs would run into anywhere from \$400 or \$500 a month to sometime \$1,000 or \$1,500 a month. And it was heavy

work. Some of those wheels were taller than I was. I had a heck of a time to rustle around with those big wheels, and I didn't like the job because it was too heavy for me. [chuckling]

You didn't think your father had made a mistake when he got you into blacksmithing, did you?

Well, I didn't...I never cussed him for that! [laughter]

What were some other important customers? Can you remember the names of other companies who would have you work on their equipment?

Well, the next steady customer was the livery stable. There were 5 at one time in Reno, and they had anywhere from 5 to 15, sometimes 20 horses; and they had buggy and wagon and 2-wheel carts. And at any time that we sort of were running out of work or getting low, well, we would go to one of those livery stables and see if their vehicles there were in good shape—whether they were planning on resetting the tires. And in around 1912 or '13 and so on, so forth, they came out with....the buggy had rubber tires. And the livery stable, they all had 4 or 5 buggies with the rubber tires, and we were taking care of the buggy with the rubber tires. It's like today take care of a Cadillac! [chuckles]

And next most important customers were the farmers surrounding Reno, or anywhere from Reno to Fallon, even Winnemucca; sometimes they were bringing vehicles to be repaired. Besides repairing their vehicles, we repaired their plows; we would repair rakes; we would repair anything that had to do with the baling of hay. And iron work that was necessary to be done, we were doing for the farmers, with the understanding they only

pay their bill once a year. And in some case, if they're honest, they pay their bill without an argument, but some of them, they would try to Jew you down. If we set 4 tires, they say they only said 2, and then we had an argument, whether we were going to get paid for the 4 wheels or for the 2 wheels, and stuff of that sort. So you learn who you deal with, and whenever you see a lemon come up to your door, you tell them either that you're so busy that they have to wait 30 days before we can work on their vehicle, or turn them down completely; that every time we do a job it is an argument and we don't have to take it. We became a little bit independent, too. There was a time that we had to stand up for our own rights.

As I've told you before, I'm very much interested in the various ethnic groups that comprised the population of northern Nevada at that time. If you did a lot of work for farmers, perhaps you can tell me something about the different kinds of things that the different farmers were doing. There must have been some Italian farmers who brought their...

Yes, oh, yes.

Can you name some of the families who came in and tell me what kind of farming they were doing?

In one family that they're still...one of the grandchildren is an architect. Casazza. That family is still today in Reno, and his grandparents, they were good customers. Those were the kind of people that did not argue about work. They paid their bills... honest and sincere.

And the grandfather of this Mapes that's today in Reno, he was a customer of ours. He was paying his bills very promptly; that

is, he was paying once a year, but there was no argument. There was a time that we soon discovered which was the best customer and the poorest.

Did you do any work for the Capurro family?

Yes, we did work for Capurro. The only thing I remember, the Capurros had a wagon; they were delivering vegetables in the summer. They were delivering cabbage and lettuce and beans and anything according to the weather. They were very nice people, and they were very genteel with their family. They go to your home, and they would do business in a nice business way. The Capurro family was a large customer of ours. The Oppio family as well. The old man Oppio, he had a large family, and some of the boys used to come in with the father when they're coming into the shop. And the old man was delivering goods to the restaurants and hotels like the Capurros did. The Oppio family were a nice family, too. We became very friendly with the children. As a matter of fact, one of the Oppio boys and myself...we got into the fights together without paying a dime! [laughter]

Which Oppio boy was that?

Charles. That was the 1910 Fourth of July Johnson-Jeffries fight.

Did you have a connection with the Italian-Swiss farmers of Sierra Valley? Were they bringing their business to Vietti and Bottini?

Well, yes. Most of those farmers were coming into Reno once a month. They had a team of horses, and we had trees in front of the shop, and they would tie their team to the tree and go downtown, perhaps to go to the court or maybe go to see a doctor or go places. In

that particular block where we were located, there was a bunch of trees, and if they didn't come to our shop, which in most of the cases they did, they would tie their teams along in that same block and go downtown. Of course, at that time, Chestnut from Virginia Street, it was only 2 blocks; there was Sierra and West. And we were practically in the heart of the town then.

And were those families extended credit?

Yes, we give them credit, and they were good. And I'll tell you something else. Those people that lived outside of Reno in different parts of the country, even in northern California, they would make cheese. You know, they were making an extremely good cheese—whether it was this hard cheese or whether it was soft. And in many cases, they were bringing in cheese, particularly to the grocery store. The ones that we were doing business with, we would much rather take the cheese for pay instead of the cash. And they were giving us cheese sometimes that we can carry on the family for the whole year. These were Swiss-Italians.

Were you able to understand one another?

Oh, yes, yes. They were talking Italian, yes. And they were good people. There was no bargaining or arguing about the cost. They pay you whatever you ask for; they lay it on the line.

There was one family by the name Ramelli; he had 7 sons. And one of them—I don't know how he got mixed up—but he was among the movie actors in Los Angeles. They educated him, and he had the appearance of someone that they liked to see in a show, and he turned out to be a movie actor. Caesar Ramelli. He and I became quite friendly.

I'm curious as to whether the Italian farmers were doing the same kind of farming as German, French, Irish farmers and what have you.

If they would have a ranch, yes. But I never seen a German to go out to peddle any vegetable; I never have seen one of those. They were more business people that had somebody work for them. They were more, you might say, leaders. They were not delivering anything themselves. They were running the business; they were running the show.

Now, there was a hotel up in Virginia City that used to send their helpers down to our shop to get a certain thing repaired—even sometimes something in a kitchen that has to do with the cooking, so on, so forth. But they sent down their servant. The people that own the place, they come down probably on Sunday or sometimes just for a visit, but they were not the kind of fellows that they would deliver the goods themselves. They'd have plenty of help, like they did up in Minden and Carson City and in Gardnerville—all that surrounding country.

But the Italian farmers were growing vegetables and delivering them?

They were growing them and deliver themselves. The Oppio family...like the father of the people that are here now, their old man was delivering the goods. He was raising the lettuce, and then he would deliver it to the family himself.

Were the German or the Irish or the French farmers growing vegetables for sale at all?

Oh, yes, yes. They all...whatever the farmer were able to produce, they had their land

working. They didn't hesitate to get in and raise whatever they were able to produce.

So everybody was growing vegetables?

Yes.

Did you find that there was any difference in the farm implements that were brought to you for repair? In other words, were the Italian farmers using different kinds of implements from the Germans or the French or what have you?

No, I wouldn't say that there was any difference. There wasn't very many pieces of equipment. There was either a plow or a rake of some kind and what machinery they used to bale hay.

Now, when you talk about baling hay, there was a family—Swede people—that he had his own gang of his own nationality. They would come along at the beginning when they start to cut the first crop of hay. He was a man by the name of Pete Olsen; he had one leg. And he was coming in with a great big, long chain sometime; he had a heck of a time to drag it out from the wagon to the shop with one leg and a cane. He was coming in, and if by any chance there was a fire that nobody was using, he walked in and he put that chain in the fire and didn't ask questions to anybody—he would start to fix his own chain! [laughter] And when his job was about finished, he said, "You charge me for whatever...if you'd done the work yourself. But," he says, "I'm in a hurry. I've got a gang of men out there waiting, and until I get these chains back, they're holding up the works." This Pete, he was kind of a loud speaker, and he was speaking broken English like I did! [laughing] He would go out there, and he'd watch. We had 5 different fires in the place,

you know, and he'd take one of these forges, and he'd go out there, and he'd fix it himself. And he knew how to fix it; he was a good mechanic. He would weld, and he could do a lot of things just as good as any mechanic. But he wasn't wasting any time. He'd drag those big chains, you know; those links that were one inch thick—those great big heavy links. He'd go out there, and he'd fix his own chains, and by the time he was ready to leave, he would pay right on the spot. He did his own work, and he pay you for it. Because he used the fire, he naturally used everything that was available. But we kind of laugh when we see him coming, because we knew that he was not going to waste any time, talk to somebody or see who's going to do his job. If there was a fire and nobody used it, he'd just jump out there and do his own fixing.

It seemed as though the Chinese people were the first people that were engaged in the laundry business in Reno. The first one that I knew of was located where the El Cortez Hotel is now. They had long pipes, and they were saying in the town that they were smoking opium—whatever it was! [laughs] But for some reason, they would keep to themselves. There was some of us kids at night that...I don't know why we had to do it, but if we go by the laundry, we pick up rocks and throw it in the window and break the glasses. But nothing happened, so we didn't keep that up very long. However, one night there was a policeman that saw some of the boys throwing rocks, and they got arrested and taken to jail, of course. I think they let them out shortly afterward. However, that put the end with throwing rocks at the Chinese laundries. [chuckles]

Did you have your laundry done at that Chinese laundry?

Oh, yes, we did. However, we had customers that used to come along, and they were taking our laundry and doing it in their own home. We had a family, the Vogliotti family, that had a farm by the race track, and we would do their work as far as repairing wagons and plows and stuff of that sort. And the wife would come along on Saturday afternoon and pick up our laundry and deliver it to us on Monday morning. The husband, in the latest years, became part owner of the Colombo Hotel.

It looked like it was a common affair for the Chinese people to be in the laundry business. They were doing laundry even for the V & T Railroad when they were operating the train. They were taking in their laundry to the Chinese people. And they operated many of those laundries in Virginia City as well as in Carson City.

From the story about the rock-throwing incident, I gather that the Chinese were not well respected here in Reno at that time.

Well, there wasn't anybody that actually had anything against the Chinese, but for some reason it look like you can do a heck of a lot of damage, and you don't get punished for it, so...like throwing rocks in the window, there was no good need to do anything of the sort. However, we did until some of the boys got arrested, and that stopped the throwing of rocks. Those days, you can pick up rocks along the streets; they were not paved like they are today, you understand.

There was a family that were German people; they had a cement plant. And we used to do work for them, too...repair machinery or building up something that they want, like building up a wheel cart to use in a factory. And they were very, very fine people. Their name was Knie. In other words, Ginocchio

in Italian, Mr. Knie in German—it meant the same thing. [In English, the words mean knee.—ed.] But his name was Mr. Knie. He was a very fine man—tall fellow, and he had a nice appearance. He had an appearance like a major or some official in the army, like a colonel.

He was a very fine man, and sometimes he would give me a tip of 25¢ or 50¢. You know, in the early days, for the help to get any tips, it wasn't a very common affair. You had to do something outstanding to be recognized as deserving the tip! [laughs] Mr. Knie always gave me a tip. Sometimes I would sharpen a half dozen picks for them, and the fellow, whoever's charged with the collecting them, he always gave me a tip just for the sake of taking care of his picks.

Were there any other German customers that you can remember?

Oh, yes. Now, this fellow, Ritter, was another fellow that we would do some work for his brewery—he was connected with the Reno Brewery. [Henry Ritter was manager of the Sierra Brewery in 1911. By 1916 (perhaps before) he was treasurer of the Reno Brewery.—ed.] And he would come along and give us the job and pay the bill, and sometime whoever did the work, he'd go out there and give them a tip.

Other than the Ritters and the Knies, what other Germans can you think of who did business with the shop before World War I?

Well, there was a lot of them, but many of them, I didn't know their name when they first come to us. I don't remember.

Did you get any Basque customers?

Yes, we had some Basque customers, and we had some Frenchmen. And, when you talk

about shearherders and so on and so forth, we had Paul Laxalt's father; he was one of my customers. There was a time in the spring of the year that he would bring a donkey to be shoed, and he also would have a mule; and the young Laxalt, he had a horse. But he was the cream of the family, you might say. He used to ride a horse, but the rest of them... the old man, he had a donkey. And he'd pay his bill right when the job was finished; you got your money right off then. He was a very fine gentleman, and so was his family. His family used to come along with the old man to the shop. And as I said, this Laxalt that turn out to be a politician, why, he turn out to be the governor of the state of Nevada. He was outstanding. You can see that he was Number One in the family; he was the kingpin, you want to call it! [laughter] And he was a very fine man; we liked him.

And there was other shearherder that used to come along, French people. There was a fellow by name Pladero. He put up a hotel building on Fourth Street and Washington; it's still standing today—8 or 9-story building. And he was a very fine gentleman. We did a lot of work for him when the building was going up. We supplied him with some railing, and we supplied him with steel for the building.

Were there any other Basque families who were bringing their work to you in the period prior to World War I?

There was a Basque man; he used to come in here from time to time. We did some very small jobs, like repairing a wagon. Like when they were planning on going out in the field somewhere, they were getting either the 2-wheel cart or 4-wheel wagon with the tires set and everything ready to go to take a trip and go places. And those Bascos as well as the French, they would pay you on the job. When

the job was finished, you get your money right now. And those were the kind of a customer that we were glad to take care of them, because there was nothing payable down on the book to carry on their charge.

And there was some Italians that were doing the same thing. There was many of those people that they would go out in the wintertime in the snow with the traps to catch wild animals. We many times would fix traps made out of steel that the animal.... Coyotes, as well as anything else, they go out there to eat whatever they set in there, and the first thing you know they get caught in the trap. And the people would go the next day to see what the result is. They catch those animals either one leg or maybe the 2 front legs or sometimes the neck into the trap. And they were selling the skin and using the meat to cook with.

In 1910 at the Vietti and Bottini Blacksmith Shop we were doing considerable work for the Virginia City mines. You know, those days they were shipping whiskey in 55 gallon oak barrels. The miners would take this barrel and saw it in the middle and then it would have 2 halves. They were filling up those half barrels with mining drill bits, and they would ship them to us in Reno to be sharpened. They were coming in on the V & T Railroad. We had one day to sharpen all these drill bits; the next day they go back to Virginia City. We had a batch coming in and a batch going out, day in and day out all through the week, except Sunday. The big mines, they had their own shop up there; they had their own mechanics to do the sharpening, but the small mines didn't have the location or the building to do their own work. They only had a place, a lot, where they were doing the digging and the mining. The tools—as far as the shovel, the picks and the drill bits—they all send them into Reno, and we were getting our share. As a

matter of fact, we were the only shop for many years that was able to keep the mine provided with the drill bits: sharp on Monday morning when they go on the job, and day in and day out through the week.

In 1910, when I first got to Reno, I was going to a private school at night to learn English. I was paying 25¢ an hour. There were 2 sisters: one of the sisters was attending the school; she was a schoolteacher. And the other one, she was a pretty well-educated girl. Whether she had any university education, I don't think she did. But I was paying one of those sisters 25¢ an hour. And the main thing, I had to learn to speak the language—to understand what potato, apple mean; the difference between the 2 of them, so on and so forth. And I kept that up for about 2 or 3 years, outside of the summer when we were working pretty hard and when the night come I was ready to lay down and go to sleep instead of go to school. But during the winter, when the night was long, I attended this private school. It was in the house of the sisters, whose name was Ferretti—Bina and Matilda Ferretti.

Matilda was a regular schoolteacher. She was teaching school in one of the schools up in Reno. And her sister was very handy; she was a bookkeeper for one of the stores. She was also my teacher at night. [Matilda and Mary Ferretti lived at 142 Vine. Matilda taught at the McKinley Park School, and Mary was the bookkeeper for the Semenza and Company General Store.—ed.] They had a lot of patience; they tried to educate me to say a word in the proper way and so on, so forth.

Later, they came out with the laws or regulation in Reno that anyone could go to school from Monday until Friday night and every night for 2 hours, from 7:00 to 9:00, at the Reno High School. That was a building that was up on Nevada Street, and that was one of the first high schools in Reno. We were

going to night school, and there was a class of us about 20 or 25. Toward the end of their school, it came out in the newspaper that all of us that received an education to become citizens, we would have to go to fight the war because the United States was going to get into a war. That's the time when I went to the county clerk, and I told him that I have 10 years' experience working as a mechanic, and that I'd rather be in some other branch beside to the infantry. And this man pat me on the shoulder; he says, "Andy, we need mechanics, and we need them the worst way to operate the railroad in France." So I signed up to the engineers and became a soldier.

First I was going to a private school. I was paying out of my pocket. There was a lot of foreigners in Reno—from the Chinamen to Japanese, Italians and Swedes and Germans and French people, all nationalities. It seemed there was a lot of them in Reno that they were not citizens. Some of these politicians, they were looking for the vote; they decide to kind of talk to us and address a bunch here and a bunch there at street corners or some other places. And from time to time they got the idea that we would be glad to go to school if we had a place to go to school after working hours. We couldn't go during the days; we had to go to work to live! [laughs] And, sure enough, they arranged to secure a schoolteacher, as well as the necessary books and so on, so forth, and they open up a night school in the old Reno High School building from 7:00 to 9:00 every night of the week except Sunday.

I was one of the students. There was about a couple of hundred of us, and it was divided in different sections—20 or 25 in a bunch here and so on, so forth. And they had all of the teachers required to carry on the school. That went along until the beginning of the First World War, when they start to

draft men. I always wonder if that war idea had any connection with the school in the early days; that, I never did know. But they thought that they better make us citizens, or probably we were sent back to where we come from....I don't know. However, we did have a school; I was there from 1913 up to 1917.

With all of the diverse nationalities here in Reno that you described to me, it must have been difficult to teach them English together.

It was. It was very difficult. Some, they were grasping, and some, they were backwards. And will say this much for the Chinese people—there was a half a dozen of them—they were bright; they were pretty near head of the class. [chuckling]

Did they divide up the people who were taking the course by ethnic background?

Well, as they went along they would try to arrange the class from time to time, yes. They would try to put the ones that would grasp the thing in a hurry in a class by themselves, and the ones that were slower were set back in another class and so on. I was right in the middle.

No, what I'm getting at is did they separate the Swedes from the Chinese, from the Italians?

No, no, those were all mixed. One time I would have an Indian descent on my side, and the next time I'd have a German guy. And we'd try to talk between ourselves the best we know how! [laughs]

Were the instructors bilingual? Could the instructors speak both English and Italian, or English and Chinese?

Oh, if they did, they didn't mention it. That was strictly English. That is, I don't think there was anyone that they could talk a different language. They might at home, but in school it was just English—nothing else but.

Can you recall the method that they used for teaching?

Well, right now I don't think I'd have it. There was a time that we had to do writing, and they were giving us like a sheet of paper, and we would answer questions, so on, so forth. We did that a lot of time. Then again, we would do a lot of reading, like reading in a newspaper. Somebody would bring in a newspaper, and then you would read this section; somebody else would read another one, and see which one was capable of reading the English without making too many mistakes [chuckling], which were plenty. But within the school ourselves, we got along very nicely. We were all eager to learn—all of us. We knew it was for our own benefit.

Was it evenly divided between men and women?

There was no women. No women at all; it was all men.

Do you have any idea why? Did anybody ever ask?

Well, we thought that since there was a bunch of fellows that were working at night, we didn't expect a young lady to go away from home at dark and to go to night school—I don't know! [laughs] But we didn't have any girls or ladies of any kind; it was all men.

Do you know if there was a school in the daytime for the women?

Oh, yes, there was. In the daytime it was like it is today; the daytime school was just women and men.

Oh, yes, it was high school. What I'm getting at is, during the daytime were there classes to teach immigrant women how to speak English?

No, I don't think there was. No, that was regular high school like it is today.

About what percentage of the students were Italians?

Oh, I would say probably 10 percent. Ten out of every 100 were Italian. The next one was the German and the Swedes, and we didn't have so many French, and we didn't have so many Chinese. We had quite a few Japanese. And I would say the Japanese were probably 15 percent; as far as the class was concerned, there was more of them than there was other nationality.

What were the Japanese people doing in this community?

Well, they were just like anybody else; they would get a job in any place where they see fit. But most of them, they liked to be working in the hotels. They were working as chambermaids and dishwashers and different jobs that was available, The lumber company, they had team of horses, and they would take care of the animals.

Shortly after you arrived in this country, you went to see the Jack Johnson-Jim Jeffries fight. How did that come to pass? Were you a fight fan already in Italy before you came to this country?

Well, no. As far as the Jeffries-Johnson fight was concerned, I associated with other young Italian fellows that were in the neighborhood. I really didn't know what I was getting into when they told me we were going to see the fight. I didn't know anything about prize fighters. A bunch of them asked me to go along with them. One was Charlie Oppio, and he was one of my right sidekicks. But none of us had the price to get in. The general admission was \$5, and we didn't have any money, but we were figuring if there was some way we could arrange it to sneak in or try to get in to see the fight. This place where they had the fight, there was a fence all the way around; it was anywhere from 5 to 6 foot high. And there was no chance...there was no door open anywhere to get in. But it so happened that we walked right alongside of the grandstand, and someone saw us kids coming, and he put the hands down. He take one by one of us, and there was 5 of us, and we all got into that with the help of this one man that put the hands down and yanked us in! [laughing] And we crawled in so that, as the fight was going on, we were up there where the \$35 seats were, but we were underneath the seats, not on top of them! [laughs]

Looking out through people's legs?

Looking through. The fight was supposed to last in the neighborhood of 42 rounds, but they only got as far as the fifteenth round, and saw that the white man was going to lose the fight. They finally decided to open the door, and they let everybody that was out there, outside, in free of charge. Of course, we were already in; we were already up there where the high price seats were! [laughs] And we saw the fight in that way.

But, you know, the thing that impressed me the most at the time was when you walked

out of there it was like going home from a funeral. There wasn't very much said from anyone. Those that lost their money, naturally they felt sorry for themselves. We didn't lose anything, but you see the other guy kind of look down, and you wonder what in the world was in his mind that he's so sad looking. But they lost money, and the thing, too: in the early days there was big feeling between the white people and the nigger. The white people had no love for the nigger, and I don't think the nigger had any love for the white people, either. And I learned shortly afterward, that Jack Johnson, the nigger that won the fight, as soon as the fight was over he sneaked out of town. He took off. He didn't even stop for dinner.

How did the Italians feel about the outcome of the fight?

Well, they were not so worried about it, because most of those Italians, they didn't gamble any money. They felt like myself—they were anxious to see the fight, but as far as buying any grandstand ticket, none of us bought a ticket to speak of, besides maybe a few.

Of course, they were new to this country. Did you recall whether they were concerned about whether Johnson won or not?

Oh, they all like to see the white man win the battle. Regardless of nationality, they were all anxious to see that the white man would win. And they all had pledged money—those that did the gambling—on the white man, and it was a sad situation when they saw that he was going to lose.

Were there any black people in the audience that you can recall?

In the early day there was very few niggers in Reno. I remember in 1910, there was only one nigger. He and another man were having a team of horses from the livery stable go to the depot. And this one nigger, he would yell, "Golden Hotel," and he opened up his mouth; and some of us kids kind of look inside of his mouth, because they were nigger on the outside and red on inside of the mouth! [laughs] And he would open up his mouth and say, "Golden Hotel," and we were looking into his mouth!

He was the only one living in Reno?

He was the only one at that time.

Can you remember his name?

No, I never did know his name.

Did more black people come into Reno before the First World War?

Shortly after the fight, the niggers start to come in. And even long before the First World War, there was a lot of niggers in Reno. They were porters. Of course, they were coming in through the train, you know. They were cooks and waiters in the train for the Southern Pacific. We would see the people particularly on Sunday morning; we would walk down when the train arrived, and just for the fun of it—you go down to the depot to see people coming out of the train and those that goes in the train. But we also see those niggers in the train that were working as cooks and waiters and so on, so forth; there was a lot of niggers then. And they start coming in, and they've been coming in ever since, as far as I know.

What part of town did they live in before the First World War?

Well, they were scattered. More or less they were toward where the race track was, in that neighborhood. That was likened to the lower class of people; that's where the nigger would first settle. But after they got in and they were fairly well financially fixed, they would mix with the high class. They didn't hesitate to spread out and be placed anywhere around the university. And on the west end of town there was a place that they used to call sort of the nigger rich place up in the... from the courthouse up in the west end on top of the hill. I forgot the name of the streets. California Avenue is one of them, and many streets right in that neighborhood, there was niggers practically in every block.

Can you recall anything about the Indian families living around Reno at that time?

Oh, yes, there were a lot of them. There was a regular place where the MGM building is now. There was a whole territory, Indian reservation. [During the early part of the Twentieth Century many Indians lived on land to the east of metropolitan Reno. It was not until 1917 that the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony (reservation) was established on 20 acres of federal property.—ed.]

When the MGM people came to Reno, we didn't think that they was going to land in that Indian reservation. But they got down there, and I presume that they dish out plenty of money. Those Indians, with the help of the city officials, were moved from Reno to Pyramid Lake. And those Indians had to get out after they sold the land. I guess they got their share of money. But actually, where the MGM is now, in that surrounding 2 or 3 square miles—it was right practically in the heart of the town of Reno—there was an Indian reservation. And the women were carrying their baby on their back; they had

sort of a strap on their shoulder, and they had this baby they were carrying. The women were carrying the baby. The men would just go along with the women, but the woman, she was the underdog or the horse, and he was the chief. I think they were Washoe. But it was mixed; there was different races even among themselves.

Did the men work in town?

Most of the men worked for themselves. In the fall of the year, when the pine nuts ripen, they were going up in the hills to gather them. And a lot of those people that were living off of Pyramid Lake were fishing. They had a right to fish without buying a license, and they used to come on in sometimes—even in the shop where I was working—coming in and want to sell me a fish. Sometimes they were 2 foot long or 18 inches or something of that sort. They were living off of the hunting, and they were living off the fishing, and they were living off the pine nuts.

And they were selling all of these things to the white people?

Yes, they were.

What were the Indian women doing? Can you recall if they worked in town?

No, they were raising a family; they were doing the housework, but they didn't go to work for the white people; they stayed by themselves. Not that I know there was any Indian woman working for the white people.

In some parts of this state, many of the Indian women would work in white houses as housekeepers. Did you hear of anything like that happening in Reno?

We heard about it, but I never saw or heard of anyone in Reno in those days that had the Indian, never. I heard where they had niggers...and white women would make chamber ladies and take care of the hotel. But I never heard of an Indian woman work for the white people until later. Maude Pete, a Paiute, worked for us from 1934 to 1956 in our home.

I'd like you to take a few minutes now and tell me about some of the businesses that were in the downtown area—particularly the Italian businesses.

Oh, yes. Well, there were 2 hotels in Lake Street—the Europa Hotel and the Toscano Hotel. There was a lot of people, particularly on Saturday night and Sunday night, who would go to these restaurants. They also had not only the Italian and the French dinner, but they had the Basco. Across the street from the Toscano Hotel there was a Basco restaurant. It had a long table, and every 4 persons, they give them one quart bottle of wine to divide between the 4. And in the early days, you pay your \$20 a month to stay in the hotel.

And get all the food you wanted to eat?

All of the food you wanted to eat 3 times a day— breakfast, lunch and dinner. Lunch was just the same as the dinner. They were giving the soup and giving meat and they were giving steaks and spaghetti and different things they had to serve. Each day they were giving a different kind of a food. One day, on Thursday, the average place was serving corned beef and cabbage for lunch, and a big glass of beer and a baked potato.

The Moana place...there was some Italians that were running a restaurant on their own. The place itself was conducted by Swedes.

They were operating a streetcar from Reno to their place of business. I can't think of their name right now; I used to know them pretty well. Saturday and Sunday they would have a baseball game out there on their place. See, they were having a place with a fence around so that the kids wouldn't get in there and play baseball. They would get so they were playing ball with the big league. And that's kept up from the early days.

The Swedish people had the land, and they had a streetcar line, and they had a building, but the restaurant was run by some of the Italians. They were just renting like one room, you might say, and did their cooking and fed the people. That took place in a different location from the town of Reno; it was out South Virginia road. Then when that airport came into Reno, there was an Italian fellow that was running a restaurant at the airport. And the restaurants— the Italian and the French, as well—they were pretty much spread all over town in different directions.

Now, talk about the Germans, there was a place on Commercial Row they used to call Becker's Saloon. They used to serve lunch in there—15¢ lunch, which included a glass of beer and a nice lunch. I had many lunches in there in the early days myself.

The businesses you've been describing to me so far have been primarily inns or hotels or restaurants.

Yes.

Can you recall if any Italian people owned, let's say, a hardware store or a grocery store or anything like That downtown?

No, they were not the owners, but there was a lot of Italians who work in a grocery store. We had one grocery store that was

owned by Italians, the Rovetti family. Pat McCarran, who was one of the prominent lawyers we had in this state, bought so darn much groceries from this Italian, but he wasn't paying the bill [Patrick A McCarran graduated from the University of Nevada in 1901. Following his election to the Nevada Legislature in 1903, he remained active in state and national politics for 51 years. McCarran was United States senator from Nevada from 1933 until his death in 1954. —ed.] And this Italian says, "I am up against it. I can't go to court and fight the senator to get my money, because he's too big!"

That would have been in the 1930s, though, more than likely.

Yes.

I know that you have an interest in sports. You've had an interest in sports all you life, as I understand it.

To a certain extent, yes. I wasn't crazy or drop everything that I was doing to go to the fights, but I don't think I missed very many of them, no!

In the years before the First World War, were there any Italian sporting activities that took place in town? Any bocci ball or anything like that?

Well, they had places where they were playing these bocci, you know. And anyone that had a saloon somewhere, in the backyard they would have a strip of land that was about 10 foot wide and 30 foot long. They played these wood balls, you know. The main game was for a quart of whiskey....maybe a quart of whiskey or a half a gallon of beer or something of that sort—mostly beer.

Was it just Italian people playing that, or was it other nationalities?

Oh, there was the French and the German people; they would play that mixed. And sometimes, even some of the nigger, some of the half-breed guys, they were playing bocci.

Were there any other sports that people liked to participate in, particularly Italian people, that you can remember?

No, as far as the sports are concerned, I don't know of any other.

What would you do with your leisure time?

There was those that they liked to go hunting, you know, in the early days. And that is why you see maybe one or maybe half a dozen guys walk along in the path with a rifle on their back. They go until they get tired and maybe go on top of a hill somewhere. Sometime they don't go more than 2 miles out of town; they go back and do not bring home anything. And I was just like one of them. I had a .22 rifle. Sometimes I would go out, and if I didn't see anything to shoot, then I'd shoot a tree just for the sake to see how steady you're able to shoot.

And there was a lot of fishermen. Today they got to have a license, but in the early days everybody that feel like going out there and catch a couple of fish, they go out there in the river. They fish in there for a couple of hours sometimes, and they catch a half dozen fish, and they take them home, and that was the end of the sport.

Well, for a young man like you—you would have been 17, 18, 19 years old at that time—it must have been somewhat difficult to meet

women. You didn't belong to the church; I think you told me that earlier.

No.

What sort of socializing were you able to do?

Well, that is kind of a sport. I had an automobile—a 2-cylinder Metz, it was. It was built in 1907. This automobile was kind of a small affair, and the motor was under the seat. I liked the automobile, and I wanted to ride, but as far as to be attractive so I can get a girl to ride with me, that was an impossibility! [laughter] It was next door to being a wheelbarrow, you might say.

There was a fellow who became mayor, named Harry Stewart; he had a Buick coupe. [Harry E. Stewart, a man of reformist inclination, was mayor of Reno from 1919 to 1923.—ed.] So this Buick of his happened to break a spring one time, and he brought it to my shop to make a new spring leaf for him. But I took the measurements—the length from the front wheel to the rear wheel—and I extended the frame on my 2-cylinder Metz so that my Metz was just as long as his Buick. [chuckling] And I put in a decent seat...and I had a treatment to put a decent cushion on, and had them laced back. So as I grew up, in those years when we were going along, I had no trouble to pick up girls to take them out for a ride, you understand, in my own car.

The sad situation was that this car was... well, it was made in 1907. It had tires that they called clinch tires. They were not like the ones that they have today that was easy to change. In those days it was hard to change. The rubber had to stretch, and the.... But I wouldn't hardly go out into a place where there was a puddle of water out in the road, because it was operated by friction drive. If the water by any chance would splash into the

friction drive—the wheel that was bearing against the disk, like—it would slip, and then you would be stuck right in the middle of the puddle of water and have no chance to get out of there until you do something about drying where the water splashed into your transmission, you might call it.

And sometime I had a girl that I had to plead quite a bit to get her to go out with me for a ride. She would suggest that we go to Moana Springs; that's where the baseball game was, you know. But those days there was no paved road; you did get in the puddle of water regardless; you had to get in to get to Moana. And sure enough, when I got into this puddle of water, I know what was happening. [laughs] I had to have rags, and open up in the back of the seat to try to dry up where the disk transmission was so we could get it going. And she was badly embarrassed. I could see from the looks on her face! [laughing]

No women were working in the blacksmith shop; you told me that there weren't any women with you learning English; you weren't going to church. How would you meet women?

Well, like if we go in the restaurant sometime, when you eat breakfast in a place, you might be sitting right next to a lady. And they had women waiting on table. This young girl that I was trying to court was named Gertrude "Goldie" Battley. (She later married Len Savage of Savage and Sons.) She lived in the rooming house where I had to work. And we became quite friendly, particularly when there was a race—there was horse races from time to time in the summer. This girl liked to go to the races, and I had to decide to give her \$5 to go to the race. Me working, and she got to see the horses run the race! [laughing]

Did you like the horses yourself?

I did like the racing part. On Saturday afternoon, or sometimes on Sunday, I used to go to horse races with her.

Are there any other leisure time activities that you can recall from before the First World War?

No, outside of the sport part about fishing and hunting and horse races....

Reno used to have an Italian newspaper, the Bolletino del Nevada. Do you recall the newspaper? Did you read it before the First World War?

Yes, yes. The newspaper was sponsored by a fellow by the name of John Granata. I think it was first coming out once a week on Saturday, and then he got so that he got an extra helper, and he was able to make it so that the paper was going out twice a week, on Tuesday and Saturday morning. Well, he was copying most of that stuff from different newspapers, and he would add it together and finally make up so that it can be an Italian newspaper. But whether he didn't try too hard, whether he didn't have anybody to play ball with him, that newspaper didn't...with the beginning of the war, when the boys went in the armed services, I think he went out of business. [The Bolletino was published in Reno from 1915 to 1944.—ed.]

He had some of his nephews that was helping him, and they were picked up and went in the army, and it was left to him alone and he quit. He went into the insurance business; his family has been in the insurance business ever since, up to this time. His grand-nephew or some of his relatives are still running the insurance company today. He passed away years ago.

Can you remember what the editorial policy of that paper might have been? Can you

remember what he might have been suggesting should be done?

No, he was broad-minded in that respect. I couldn't remember, because outside of somebody getting married or... sometimes I would read about a wedding, but I never did subscribe to his paper.

Did the Italian community get involved in politics?

Not very well. And I'll tell you one point that makes you laugh. There was one saloon, the Bello Monte Bar, that was run by a man by the name of Louis Avanzino. He felt as though he was quite popular, and he knew all the ranchers up in the valley, the Truckee Meadows. At one time he decided that he would run for county commissioner or something to that effect. He got a horse and buggy from the livery stable, and he spent the whole day up in the valley telling these Italians that he's going to run for a certain position, so on, so forth—to vote for him. And everyone shook hands and promised him that they would vote. The day the election came along, he only had one vote from all the Italians in the valley. He was dumbfounded; he was taken by surprise. And after he thought it over considerably, he says, "I'm going to get that horse and buggy, go back and thank every one of those fellows for their cooperation in voting for me." So he took the same horse and buggy, went up in the valley, and he went to every house that he stopped at in the first place, and every one swore by him that that one vote, that that was his! [laughter] But it must have been at least 25 or 30 votes to be had, and he only had one.

It sounds as if the Italians weren't very active politically, then?

Well, he was well-liked to a certain extent, but he was sort of a tightwad, you know. He wouldn't give a dime of his money to...and let you starve to death. And they knew it. Those guys there in the valley knew who he was! [laughs]

Were there any social or fraternal organizations for Italians that were operating prior to the First World War?

Not that I know of; there was no lodge or clubs or anything of that sort.

Was there an Italian doctor that may have treated the...?

Yes. His name was [Antonio] Minniggio. He was a very fine man and a very good doctor. And matter of fact, he was in Reno when I came here, and I became familiar with him or knew him since a couple of years after I was here. He lived to be 89 or 90 years of age. He was going from the Washoe General Hospital to Saint Mary's Hospital...walk, hike. And on the way from one place to the next, sometimes he had many customers that he would stop to see, and he would make house visits. Some patients he treated with onion packs, bacon around the neck, and other home remedies.

But I felt sorry for that poor doctor; he was too good to be...he was an enemy to himself, you might say. He would visit those fellows, and he would take care when they had babies, and when they were nearly passing out and they would finally die; there was many of those Italians, they'd never paid him a dime. Never gave him a dime. And he didn't have the nerve to go out and ask for them to pay him. If they saw fit to dish out \$2 or \$3 whenever they walk out of the office, then that was all right. But as far as for him to send them a bill, there was no such a thing.

Was he the doctor for most of the Italian people?

He was the doctor for most Italians....and many other nationality, too. He was doctor for everybody! [laughs]

Where was his office?

His office was on Commercial Row. On Commercial there was a fire house, and his house was the first building on West Street behind the fire house. Today the fire house has been destroyed or did away with, and I don't know what's in there now. But there was a fire house in there—the first fire house in Reno. Dr. Miniggio's house was next to the fire house.

You've been talking primarily about your countrymen from the north of Italy. Were there southern Italians or Sicilians living here in Reno at the same time?

There wasn't very many Sicilians; there was a few Sicilians that had a barber shop. But back in the old country, there's more of a separation between the north and the south. In the first place they have a dialect. The north, they don't understand the Sicilians; the Sicilians didn't understand the north—particularly from Genoa and from Piedmont and Lombardi. And they speak a different dialect north than they do south. Particularly those Sicilians down south—they had the lingo that even here in the states if you had to talk to one of them, I couldn't make out what they were saying.

Was there a separation between the Sicilians and the northern Italians here in Reno?

Well, normally...of course, you had to go to the Sicilians because there was no other

barber in Reno that you can go to. One of them was Arthur Gildone, who was in the army with me. His son, Mario Gildone, is a dentist here in Reno today. Another barber was named Granata.

And he was a Sicilian, too?

Yes.

Were most of the barbers in this town Sicilians?

Well, there was only 3 or 4, and they were mostly Sicilian. There was one that was across the street from the Golden Hotel; I couldn't think of his name now, but he was my barber. I didn't have any whiskers to shave in those days, but I was getting a haircut for 25¢ and 15¢ for a shave. Those that had to...they can get a shave and a haircut for 75¢—50¢ a haircut and 25¢ shave.

Funny that I couldn't think of his name right now. He was a very nice man, very fine fellow. He had 7 chairs and he was busy... particularly on Saturday, and he was open late at night at some times. All of those chairs were busy—7 of them.

And he had 7 barbers working for him?

Seven barbers, yes.

Were the other barbers Sicilian also?

Well, I didn't know. Outside of the owner, I didn't know the name of the barbers.

Was there any hostility between the northern Italians and the Sicilians?

Not particularly. But if there was a funeral, if it was one for a north Italian, practically all of the north Italians would turn out to the

funeral. But if it was a southern Italian, half of the time half of the people wouldn't turn out, unless they were friendly, which it'd have to be some way tie...family tie.

When you worked for the Vietti and Bottini Blacksmith Shop, how many other blacksmith shops were there in town as your competitors?

There was 5 of them. There was one by the name of Bony that were French people; they were talking French. And there was another place that they called Corbett. He had 5 or 6 men, about the same size as we were. Plus there was Leach on Church Lane and Casey on Chestnut Street. Corbett was Irish, and he was a nice man, too. He was a good Joe, even though we were in competition with one another. He was a great big husky fellow, and if he find you at the bar in the same place in the saloon, he'd ask you to have a glass of beer.

Then there was 2 or 3 places where they were shoeing horses—nothing else but shoeing horses. We were not too concerned about the horse business, but Corbett was a fine fellow; we used to like him very much. And the Bonys, sometimes they'd come to us; they look for certain things, you know. Like in the early day they had a Studebaker wagon, and when an axle was wearing out, they had a new timber...timber axle, they used to call it—a new sleeve that you replace. You take the old one out, and you put the new one in; you have like a new axle. You don't have to buy the whole new cross member; you only bought just this sleeve that goes with it when the wheel was turning. And those French people, they used to come and buy it from us just because they had a set of wheels that they didn't have what it takes to repair. We were buying, those days, the parts for the wagons—particularly the Studebaker wagon—from a

house in Stockton. Higginbotham Brothers, it was, and they're still in Stockton to this day.

What kind of work were the Frenchmen, the Bonys, doing?

Well, they were fixing wagons, most of it. They would take care of these lumber company trucks.

The same sort of thing you were doing, then?

Yes, about the same thing that we were doing.

But for different companies?

Oh, yes, it was for different companies. There were different companies came from California that were going up into the woods to cut timber. And we in Reno were the nearest place to them to get some work done whenever they either break down or if they want some new parts, particularly like in the line of tools for chopping trees or...different stuff that they needed—wedges, steel wedges. And we had that stuff made.

What about the Corbett shop? What sort of work was it doing?

He was in the same thing. Corbett was doing the same thing as we did. Also Leaches; also Caseys.

So the 5 of you were all in competition for the wagons that were operated by the lumber companies?

We were in competition, but we were good friends with all of them. We would exchange stuff with one another.

I'm curious as to whether your customers were divided up in any way. As an example, did your shop get most of the Italian business and Corbett get most of the Irish, or did you just tend to...?

Well, it was to a certain extent that way, but it was not so very strict. There were some Americans that would come to us just because they were Italian, but they came to us. And so did the Irish people. And I know that some of the Italians go to Corbett and the Bony place, too.

You didn't go on working for Vietti and Bottini more than a couple of years, and you left.

A couple of years, yes.

Tell me why you decided to leave.

Well, when I first land in there, like I was telling you earlier, I had a cousin that was the owner. But I had to work in there like at starvation wages; I would get \$20 a month. But in the wintertime, when there was heavy snow and there was hardly any work coming here from any direction, my relative suggested that I go shovel snow for the Southern Pacific up on top of the hill; that I could make myself a few dollars. Outside of that there was nothing to do.

Well, I says, "Last spring, when you decided to pay me \$20 a month, you didn't tell me that in the wintertime I was to shovel snow up on the hill." I didn't have any clothes to put on; I didn't have any winter clothes to try to keep warm, even if I did go up there. So I decided that was the beginning of the finishing, and I was heading for Sparks, which was a railroad shop area at the time. There was a lot of people working in there; I don't know, 500 or 600 people worked in the Sparks railroad equipment repair shops.

WITH THE ARMSTRONG MANUFACTURING COMPANY, 1912-1917

When I was on my way down to Sparks I stopped in front of the Armstrong Manufacturing Company shop, and I saw 6 or 7 men inside. It seemed as though everybody was busy working; they were fairly rushed at whatever they were doing. The man in charge of it was George Armstrong himself, and he seemed to know me. He made me a sign to go and see him, and I did. And he asked me if I wanted to go to work for him. I was tickled pink to find the opportunity to say yes; I didn't waste any time! That was about 11:30 in the morning, and he told me to be there by 1:00. I was there ready to go to work at about 1:00, and I worked for him from around 1912 until 1917. I was working for him when I joined the army.

He had a blacksmith shop also; is that correct? You didn't mention him earlier when you were talking about competitors.

But he was one of the blacksmiths, just the same as Bony, the same as Corbett, yes.

Was his shop doing the same sort of work?

Yes.

Did he ever tell you how he got to know about you? Did you have a reputation already?

After we got to talking with one another, I remembered seeing him in our shop; he was looking for some kind of horseshoes at that particular time, as we got to talking with one another. I didn't know him to speak of, but he did know me. And I think he must have saw me working, because I was active; I wasn't lazy, by any means. [chuckling]

How much did they offer you?

I was getting \$3 a day. Imagine, from \$20 a month to get \$3 a day! [laughs] That's when I bought an automobile shortly afterward!

Can you tell me where his shop was located?

Yes. You know where the depot of the Western Pacific is today? Well, his shop was across the street.

After you began working at the Armstrong shop, did you continue to live at the Europa Hotel?

Well, no. At that time there was a place across the street from Armstrong shop that they used to call the Richelieu Hotel. I moved from where I was downtown to the Richelieu Hotel. It was a better place; they had steam heat in there, where there was no heat at the other place down at the Europa Hotel...it was just a great big room like being in the army. They had different cots in there, and you had your suitcase under the bed. Out there in the Richelieu Hotel it was just live like a white man—you had steam heat and hot water. [laughter]

Did Armstrong have any other Italians working for him?

Hot in that particular shop. I was the only Italian.

Speaking about the experience I had with him, he had a building in Alturas, California. In 1914 or '15—I don't remember which of those 2 years—he had it rented out, and they had a laundry, and the place caught fire and it burned up. He had some insurance, but he had to go up there and he wanted to build up the place again. He put me in charge of the shop in Reno. To tell you the truth, I was a greenhorn, to speak of, and I thought I had more than my handful to try to take care of 6 other men. They were all born and raised here in the States, and to have to take orders from me, I thought that that's a kind of a pretty hard task. I didn't know whether they were going to put up with me or not. But I told him, "You've got a bunch of men out there; they have much more experience than I have. Why put me in charge?"

He says, "Andy, I can't trust them." He says, "The dollars, I'm afraid they go down in their

pockets instead of mine." And he says, "I can trust you."

Well, I thought that was all right. But anyway, he said that every 2 or 3 months he'd be down in Reno to see how things were going. Under those conditions I agreed that I would run the shop for him. And to make the long story short, sometimes I had to use my paycheck to see that everything else was paid, so that when he come along he would see on the books that I was making progress instead of going behind! [laughs] Sometimes I would use my whole week's paycheck to take care of the rest of the bill and do away with mine, as long as I was able to live. But eventually I got so that I gained the faith of the men that I was working with, and they all were pretty good workers; they were sincere about it. And there was no cutthroat opposition; they were willing to give me a day's work. I was not looking for any special favors. I wanted what was right and fair and square, and we got along very nicely.

Before leaving for Alturas, George Armstrong took me down to the Washoe County Bank and introduced me to the manager. And he said to the manager, "This man's going to run my shop for the next 6 months, and he'll be coming in here and making bank deposits and then taking care of the business the same as I would." I was the youngest and the greenest one in the plant, and I felt as though I had quite a load on my shoulders at my age. I had 6 other men to take care of and provide their paychecks and try to keep them busy while they're working, and I felt as though it was more than I could do.

Along with the line of work, this man Armstrong was a member of the Chamber of Commerce Board; and he told me that I should go attend the meeting, represent him, and anything that come along. At that particular time it looked like we were trying

to bring the Lincoln Highway through—it was supposed to be the main road between California and Colorado and Utah and so on, so forth. [In the period 1914-1916 communities and private interests were attempting to raise funds for the construction of a trans-continental road, the Lincoln Highway. Reno did not succeed in becoming a destination on the road, which eventually was constructed along the route followed by the present U.S. 50. After World War I, the Victory Highway, U.S. 40, was constructed through Reno with federal funds.—ed.] We did considerable work, like putting up signs at different locations sponsoring this Lincoln Highway. However, during this Chamber of Commerce meeting, the main squeeze in there was the banker of the First National Bank. There were the different hardware store owners. Jack Horgan, a typical Irishman, was president of the Commercial Hardware Company. He was a very nice man to talk to, and I was kind of glad to see him be in the Chamber for the reason that he and I were sort of foreigners to the United States—he had his accent, and I had mine! [laughs]

After Armstrong came back to the plant, well, naturally the whole responsibility as far as the Chamber of Commerce Board was concerned was turned over back to him. But I was the youngest member at the time. I don't think I was more than 18 or 19 years of age. Like I said, for my age I felt I had quite a responsibility to take care of the works in the shop and also to be a board member of the Chamber of Commerce of Reno.

What was the Chamber's contribution going to be in bringing the Lincoln Highway into Reno?

Well, it looked like Reno was a headquarters for different lines of endeavor. Even in the early days when it was first discovered, it was

a central place, like north and south and east and west.

The Chamber was just sponsoring the idea of the Lincoln Highway. It was just like a political affair, you might say, that they would try to get every business firm or even farmers to go with the idea to bring the main road to Reno. Eventually on the same location, they put up this road that we have today, like Number 80 and 395 coming from the north. And they actually sponsored the road. The people in the city and farmers, they were very much enthused that we should have a main highway to go from state to state.

Were they trying to get taxes raised in order to support it or to sell a bond issue, or what was the idea?

No, they were try to raise taxes, but they didn't get the OK. Now, when the First World War came along, then they got to the stage to tax anybody as far as to put up any money to build a highway. Eventually, I think the state took over, and the different states got their heads together when they eventually put a highway from Sacramento to Utah.

When the telephone company first come to Reno, in their line of endeavor they had to have a lot of tools that we at Armstrong were pretty near taking care of. Like they had steel bars, 8 foot long, that had to be sharpened on both ends. And the picks that they would do a lot of digging trenches or setting poles with, and the shovels. They had a shovel with a 15- or 20-foot handle. And they had to be taken care of; whenever they get worn out, they had to be either resharpened or add another piece of steel. We were doing a lot of work for the Bell Telephone Company at the time... not only from the beginning but up until the latest years, when they finally decided to buy machinery that they bought from the factory

with different line of powers and diggers and so on, so forth. They did away with the hand tools that they used to use, but for many, many years, from the beginning, when they first laid out the telephone.... The first telephone was for the city of Reno—the mayor and his different offices with the city people—and then the main stores had a telephone. We had a telephone at the Armstrong Manufacturing Company, and our telephone was Number 15.

I'm also told that you knew the fellow who had the first airplane here in Reno, and that the blacksmith shop might have worked on it.

Yes. It was a man by the name of Blanche. The first airstrip that was in Reno was where the golf course is now on the south end of Arlington Street. Blanche had an airplane, and he was doing considerable flying. From time to time he had to have the spring repaired. When he landed, for some reason the back of the plane was hitting the ground, and he was breaking the spring. That's when we got acquainted with the Blanche airplane field.

He actually had in mind to open up an airport where the golf course is now, but at the time it was just a bare piece of land. And it so happened that he was flying around Reno, and he dropped just above the cemetery and he got killed.

I get the impression, from other conversations that we have had, that the Armstrong Manufacturing Company was involved in things that some of the other shops weren't involved in.

Yes. And he also had some connection with the Nevada Transfer Company. Nevada Transfer had around 10 or 12 delivery trucks. They were picking up material from the depot, when the train was unloaded, and they were

taking it to a warehouse; and from warehouse they would deliver it to different places, like a laundry or cement plant or so on, so forth. Nevada Transfer was the only company in Reno in those days that were delivering goods. Whether it was heavy or light material, they had van for carrying it. If a family wanted to move from San Francisco to Reno, they would go to San Francisco and pick up their whole houseful of goods and bring it into Reno, and vice-versa. And particularly from Reno to Virginia City. Virginia City was quite a large city. And Reno was only just across town; it had barely developed.

At that time the Nevada, California and Oregon Railroad was a narrow gauge. There was a train every morning, and it was coming in every night—one was going up, and the other was coming down. But they felt as though they would probably pick up some more business if they had a bus-like rail vehicle to run in between the trains. At that time there was the Haines automobile. The NC & O supplied the Armstrong shop with both of these Haineses, and we cut the frame in the middle and extended it so that it would carry 20 passengers, plus the operator and the conductor. This rail bus came along, and they were having almost a full load when they were going out. They would go as far as Lakeview, Oregon, and come back the next day.

The sad situation about the thing was that every time that it was taking a trip, when they come back they had to have the brakes relined. At that particular time the automobile had 2 rear wheels with the brakes. And with this rail bus full of people they had quite a load going downhill; the brakeman had nothing else to do but put on the brakes! [laughter] When he got to Reno, he had no more brakes to put on. They were just sliding along. It became too costly for them to try to put the brakes on all of the wheels. When I came back from

the army, the 2 buses were no longer on the track.

You said you lengthened the frame. Did you have to lengthen the driveshaft as well?

We had to lengthen everything—the frame, the driveshaft and the brake rods, and the steering apparatus had to be lengthened out. And this fellow, Armstrong, was a capable man; he had reliable mechanics that were able to do the work. As far as the mechanical part, it was well done and well taken care of. But as I said, there wasn't enough brakes to stop the vehicle.

Today, there's very little travel between Oregon and Reno. What was going on back then that would make it economically feasible to run a train every day?

Well, it seemed as though that the rail bus was sort of attractive. Many different ones that I know of, they were going just for the fun of it. They were just taking a ride. They'd go as far as Lakeview, Oregon, and stay there overnight, then come back the following day—they thought that it was quite a treat. You know, in the early days, the automobile was something that every man couldn't afford to have, and being able to buy the ticket—which I think the price was not out of line at all—it was very attractive to business people, particularly. Take like people that were buying animals or hogs and horses and different things, they were going north because they had a supply of meat and such things as cows and sheep and so on to the north.

Being that the railroad had a narrow gauge, the space between the wheels was very narrow. We had to reduce the length of the axle, the length of the housing, and we had to arrange it so that we had railroad wheels instead of rubber tires.

Did you ever ride it?

No, I never got to go because I was too busy in the shop. But I was anxious to take the trip. I never have to this day, as a matter of fact! [laughs]

Lawton Hot Springs was a place 6 miles west of Reno where you could go swimming, take a hot bath. There was also the same kind of a hot spring at Moana. When Johnson-Jeffries fight came to Reno, I think Johnson was located at the Moana hot spring, and Jeffries was at the Lawton spring. Both places had hot water springs that anyone could go and take a steam bath in if they wanted to.

The Lawton place is still in there today; it's sort of a nightclub. I don't know if it's open now or not, but it was a nightclub like many others that you could go up there and dance as long as you wanted to and have a nice dinner. The hot spring's still there at the present time under a different name. I don't know who owns it at the present time, but in the last 20 years, different people were coming in particularly from California, take over the place, remodel, put in some new ideas. The last time that they did some remodeling, they had a spring of water shooting up in the air 20 or 25 feet. It was very attractive for the railroad; when they go by there, they'd sort of slow down the train to see the hot spring shooting water up in the air. And I don't know if they're open right now or not, but the spring's still there, nevertheless.

The Armstrong-company would do a lot of work with building. We were doing work with different places in the mines, particularly in Virginia City, and down in Fallon and the Getchell mine. There was a man by the name of George Wingfield; his mine was in Tonopah. But he had prospects around Sparks. Some of those Sparks holes are still in here today.

What sort of work were you doing for the mines?

If they had a place where they had a shaft going down, we were fixing the elevator; we would make the elevator bucket, where 4 or 5 miners go into the elevator and shut the door, and you go down to the bottom of the hole. We would also sharpen drill bits and sharpen picks and sharpen different kinds of tools that they were using to dig or break stone, like with a hammer. We were doing a lot of work for mines. Half of our job consisted of mining; the other half consisted of this Nevada Transfer trucks and wagons that they had around town.

Repairing those?

Yes. And we had plenty of work all year round.

I learned in every place...even sometimes when you hire a helper that he's a stranger to you, and you put him to work, sometimes you see him do a job different than what you do yourself, and you learn from him the better way or quicker way of doing it.

When I was with Vietti and Bottini I learned to temper. I learned to temper tools like cold chisels and different tools that had to be tempered. Besides sharpening them, you got to know how to temper. You've got to understand the heat of the metal; you've got to understand the grade of the steel that you deal with. And particularly with these Italians, they were buying steel from Sweden to make tools for these miners and leaf springs for wagons. It was an extremely high grade of metal, extremely high grade. And you had to be darn careful when you tempered that Swede steel, and give it a different temper than the domestic steel, because if you did give the same temper as the domestic steel, it would break, the first hit that you give it with

the hammer. So these Italians, they were good people to understand the tempering, and I learned from them. But mostly I had learned my trade in the old country.

When you went to the Armstrong shop before the First World War, what were you learning there?

At that particular time, that's when automobiles were first coming in. Armstrong had 4 men to do nothing else but automobile repair. That's when I learned the tempering and making of the automobile and making of the automobile springs. The miners from Virginia City used to come to Reno and put on a parade on Labor Day. At that particular time there was only 7 automobiles. There was 3 doctors and 3 lawyers and the mayor of the town.

Can you recall anybody ever coming in with a design for any kind of equipment and asking the Armstrong shop to manufacture it for them?

There were 2 brothers from Minden-Gardnerville, German people. [John Dangberg and H. F. Dangberg, Jr.] One had a bank, and the other one was taking care of their stock or the farming. They got to the point in 1912 or 1913 where they decided to sell some of their potatoes...send some of their potatoes to San Francisco. The 2 brothers went to Carson City, and they talked to the railroad man up there and asked about sending a carload of potatoes to San Francisco. This man in charge of the railroad station said that he didn't know; he would talk it over with the company, and to give him a week's time that they give them an answer. So they agreed to it.

A week later, they go up there to see what the score was. And the railroad man was somewhat embarrassed. He says, "You know,

my company told me to tell you that they're hauling ore, not garbage." Whenever those people heard that their potatoes were garbage, they didn't like the sound of that music at all! [laughs]

They says, "All right." They walk out of there, and they call it quit.

They came to Reno, and they came to my shop. They wanted to know if I can build a truck body. But before they came to my shop, they went to the automobile-truck dealer, whose name was Wainwright. He only had one truck for sale, and it was the kind of a truck that they called a Mack truck; it had a bulldog on the radiator. They bought this one truck, and they paid for another one, which was supposed to have gotten in a week later. And they came to me with some sketches that they want to build a truck bed on this particular truck, 8 foot wide and 16 foot long—flatbed. I was not able to give them a price for the reason I never built one before. I told them that I would charge them labor and material, whatever it takes, accordingly, and we agreed on that, that they went into on that price.

A week later come along, they got the truck and it was ready to go. They couldn't find anybody to drive the truck to Minden, because nobody knew how to drive one! [laughter] They had to go back to the man that sold them the truck, and he had to get one of his mechanics to take the truck to Minden or Gardnerville, and then they had to teach somebody how to drive it by going around blocks in Gardnerville... Minden. They said they get to the place when it's time to stop, and the man said, "Oh, whoa!" He was hollering like if he was trying to stop a team of horses! [laughter]

Eventually, I built the second truck, and they came and got that. And they did get the potatoes to San Francisco. However, they had

a hard time to get there. The first day that they started out from Minden, they got to Verdi. The next day they stopped to Truckee, and the following day they went up on top of the summit, and they got to the stage when one wheel was down in the gutter, and the other wheel was on top of a rock. And the truck, with all of the potatoes they had on the bed, they slid off of the truck; they lost a load. They had to reload the truck.

Finally they made it down to Carcinus (near Benicia), and there they had another stop for the reason that the people who operated the Carcinus barge didn't want this truckload of potatoes on the barge for fear that it would tip the barge and lose the truck and all. So they had quite a discussion; they wasted a whole day debating; finally, they decided to load up the truck and the potatoes and got them to San Francisco. But it took them a whole solid week to get there.

If there was a building going up, contractors used to come along to the Armstrong shop with the blueprints. Sometimes they had a railing, or they had an I beam, or they had reinforcing steel they wanted. And I used to be the one that had to go with the general contractor and size up the situation on the blueprints. Sometimes we had to go on the job, which was right in the city of Reno, and see where their steel was going to go and see what we're going to use—what kind of metal, and how long, and so on, so forth. In most cases, we go according to the drawing, and sometimes the general contractor would have an idea that would simplify the case; it would save him and it would save me working by a change to a certain extent from the blueprints. We would do that. Like the design of an ornamental railing—go like from the first floor to the second floor.

We had books from the old country that'd show railings that was made wrong in some

places—even in Berlin, even in Germany. And I would show the general contractor these books, and sometime he would pick out a certain drawing from the book—deviate from what the blueprints had called for. That took place in Reno and Carson City and down in Fallon sometimes, but mostly at the University of Nevada. We did many jobs at the University of Nevada that run away from the blueprints completely; we made our own design according to approval of the general contractor.

The first job I was involved in up there was the Morrill Hall. It was a building we would repair—we made some steel doors down in the basement; we made fire escapes, and we made steel up in the rafters and in the roof to keep the main frame together. We made a lot of bolts and steel plates and rods and so on and so forth to assemble the roof of the Morrill Hall before the First World War; it must have been 1915 or 1916.

The next building that we worked on was, I think, Lincoln Hall. (When the First World War broke out, we were stationed up there. My room was Number 13.) We did some work up there, particularly with the cement men and the stone masons. The stone masons had to tie one stone with the next, jointly, to stay put. They tell me at the time that if you put up 2 stones together, in the course of years between the heat of the summer and the cold of the winter, the 2 stones will become apart. The water and frost gets in there and it'd spread the 2 stones. But they would drill a hole in one block and another one in the other one and put a steel cross and tie the 2 of them together, and they stay put for as long as the stone lasts. And that took place on that building up there, particularly, to hold the stone together. Also, they had to have rods and bolts to kind of tie these timbers together, and then with a turnbuckle pull them to the right position to stay put.

This day, a lot of the architects do away with the system that they had 30 or 40 or 50 years ago. They do things different today. In most cases they lay a flat roof, and in those days there was no such thing as a flat roof.

Are there any other buildings at that time that you worked on that are on the university campus?

Not at the university that I remember. We did a lot of work at the university later, but in the early days, outside of the 2 buildings that I remember, I don't know of any others.

What was your impression of the campus at that time?

Well, it was like a school place, like Mary S. Doten Elementary School. Sometimes they had a building and they had probably one acre of land, you know—sort of a yard like the children to play with. In my early days, I had no idea that it would turn out to be the university it is today, by no means. I hadn't the least impression that it someday was going to be a big place that's going to be 15 or 20 or 50 buildings. I thought I'd never see the day that it would be developed to the stage that it is today. Never.

Do you recall ever having seen any of the students or faculty in town?

I used to know some of the students that were there. There was a Frenchman. He turned out to be a prize fighter; that's why I happened to know him. His name was George Malone. George Malone was a man about your height, probably a little heavier. [Interviewer is 6 feet, one inch in height; weighs 155 pounds.] He was a fighter up there. And if his team didn't go, just to suit himself, he wouldn't mind to

go out there any time, and he'd face the man face to face. If there turned out to be any fight [laughter], George Malone would win the fight. He was a fighter. And he turned out to be a...I think he had a job in Washington, D.C., in the early days.

That's the George Malone you're thinking of? He was United States senator from Nevada, 1947-1959. [Malone was a 1917 graduate of the University of Nevada. —ed.]

That's right, that's right

You saw him get into fights?

We were very good friends. Sometime he would teach me how to use my fist! [laughter]

Where did you meet him?

Well, I don't know. He had to come to the shop one wintertime—maybe 1914—and he wanted some kind of iron made to tie the ski to his shoes. At that time I was working for George Armstrong. This fellow Malone sort of drew a print of his own. He had some skid iron that he wanted tied to his shoes, but he didn't have the metal to do the tying with. And he had quite a time to explain to us, including me, how we're going to tie that metal to his shoes and stay put, and not to be too complicated. Then, when he'd get out of the ski place, he wanted so that he can use his shoes without the ski on it. And we had quite a time. We made 2 or 3 different sets, but in the beginning, they didn't work satisfactory to him or to us. And we agreed that if we can't make it work, we're not going to charge him for it. I think that's the thing that kind of...he became fond of us—that if we didn't do a job satisfactorily, he didn't have to pay! [laughter] However, we made sort of a set screw with a

kind of a thumb screw there, we called it, and you can tie those things to his shoes and they stay put. And whenever he wants to take them off, he unloosens the screw, and the thing would come on out. And he had a spike to go in the back of the heel, so that was kind of a safety pin. First of all you drill a hole in the heel in the back at about half or three-quarters of an inch into the heel, and you tie the thing in there. Then you tie toward the front with the screws. We made it so it turned out to be a good job.

Now, this was while Malone was a student at the university?

That's right.

You said that he got into fights occasionally. Can you recall what the fights were about?

It was kind of a sport affair; I don't know—maybe it was a part of his study, too. But there was a time like on Saturday night that they would put on a fight, and he would be the kingpin of the fight. They had 2 or 3 preliminary affairs, like those greenhorns, you know? But the last fight would be he and someone. And boy, he'd go around 16 or 17 rounds like nobody's business. And then he finally laid out the guy on the floor. [laughs] And he was quite of a hero. We liked him for that because he was a good fighter.

Was he known to get into fights outside of the ring?

Well, that was a time there was some doing at the Riverside Hotel, and sometime it would end up into a fight in the end for some reason—either jealousy with the girls or whatever the score was; in many a case I never knew the reason for it. When George

Malone got into it, they were scared to death that somebody was going to get beat up, and George was a man that could do it. [chuckles]

Can you remember any other students or faculty from the university from that time?

Well, there were different ones. Matter of fact, it was some of those students that I was producing a job for them. They working in the shop, and whatever money that I would pay them, they would use it to pay their way to the university. I had 2 fellows from California. They was on their second year, and that was the time when George Malone was going to fight. These 2 boys, they got in some of these bootlegging joints downtown, and they got drunk and they did get into a fight, and they beat up some young people that were not of age. They come near to go to jail. But in order to save their skin they jump the university; they went home back in California somewhere. One of the men, I owed him a week's salary, and he never did come back to pick up his check.

Can you recall what sort of feeling there was about the university on the part of the townspeople before the First World War? Did they respect the university—the students and the faculty?

Yes. Today, anyone that has the price to send the young man to university, they don't think nothing of it. But those days, whenever a fellow was able to go to university, it was somebody from an upper class family—somebody that... there was money. Like Getchell. There was a Getchell mine somewhere; I think he had 2 or 3 boys and 2 or 3 girls—they all attend the university. There was plenty of money coming out of the ground. And to us, we didn't think it was

nothing new, as far as the Getchells, because he was a miner and he had the gold mine. But the way the thing turned out in the latest years, the people that was able to attend the university—like the son of a doctor or the son of a lawyer or the son of a wealthy person... that there was money without scratching for the last nickel. Today it seems as though that anybody able to make 2 ends meet can attend the university and they think nothing of it.

What I was really angling at was not the difference in what it cost to go, but whether or not the work that was being done up there was respected.

Oh, yes, it was respected. It was considered to be the top notch. When a fellow would graduate from the university and he was a doctor and he was a lawyer, it was considered to be the last minute...up-to-date mechanic, you might say, in their line of endeavor.

Did you make any trips to San Francisco before the First World War?

Nineteen fifteen was my first trip to San Francisco. That was the first world fair they had down there, the Panama-Pacific Exposition. In a place where they had different things to show, they were showing the Panama Canal—where the water was taken out in ponds from this ocean, and segregate the different ponds, so on, so forth, until the boat got from the particular ocean here to the western one, you know.

Anyway, that was my first trip to San Francisco. I saw this and different things that they had to show. And at that particular time, they also showed the Ford automobile company, where they were selling Model T Fords. And that was the day that you could buy a Ford automobile for \$100.

Did you think about buying one?

I was thinking about buying one, and I wish I could have bought it, but I did not know how to get it back to Reno. I couldn't go to the hotel and tell them to keep my automobile. Those days, the automobiles were far and few between! They were assembling those cars very fast, and they were showing where they were taking the frame and they were taking the axle and they were taking the different parts and this...the motor, and set it into the frame. And first thing you know, you find it out there on 2 tracks that would spin the wheels and then it goes out on its own power. It was very interesting for a man that was mechanically inclined like I was to see the parts be put together and put the gasoline in the gas tank, and first thing you know you see the thing run out on its own power.

Did you get any ideas from that about how to run the blacksmith shop?

Well, not exactly, but I was very, very much taken up. If it was anything that was interesting to me, I didn't miss it! [chuckles]

Had you gone to San Francisco by train?

Yes, I went down by train.

Did you stay in North Beach?

No, I stayed in Eddy Street. There was a hotel on Eddy Street—I forgot the name now, but I wasn't on the North Beach then.

Did you do any business while you were there? I know you were still quite young, but eventually we'll be talking about your later connections with some San Francisco businesses. I'm

wondering if you developed any of those while you were there.

Not in 1915. I was still a young kid.

Did you ever go to the Italian section of Stockton?

Well, I visited Stockton probably every 5 or 6 years, but I'd just pass through there. In most cases I would go by way of Stockton to go to San Francisco.

Did you have any family or friends there?

I had some friends, yes. I had some relatives, as far as that goes. My first cousin, John Ghiggieri, was a fruit grower. In Concord, my cousin, Andrew Moresco, became a well-known wine maker. Jack and Louis Ginocchio were also fruit growers. But I would just stop and say hello and probably spend a couple of hours with them. As far as living there, I never did.

George Armstrong was a great Odd Fellow. As a matter of fact, through his years of experience he became quite active and received a great honor that they confer among the fraternity. George Armstrong, kind of induced me to join the Odd Fellows. I didn't know anything about it. However, I think in his frame of mind he thought it might be a good thing for him to kind of keep me under his wing for the reason that after working hours, we, like all the rest of the boys, were going out downtown. And if some decided to do some damage, well, I was one of them—not because I wanted to, but I was just trying to keep up with the society. [laughs]

I became an Odd Fellows and came to take an interest on the work they were doing. And then in 1915, I visited the San Francisco Odd Fellows Lodge while I was there to see

the Panama-Pacific Exposition. They were very friendly, a very interesting people to deal with, to talk with. Some of those fellows even invited me to go to their home, although I didn't go. I had an arrangement made to stay in a hotel for a whole solid week, and I didn't go to anybody's home. However, I became very much interested, the way they treated me, that they make me feel like at home.

As we went along, in the beginning of the first war, it seems that I was the only boy in Reno Lodge Number 14 that was made a soldier and had to go to war and fight the war. The women of the lodge in particular—the Rebekah, they call it, Number 7—they made me a gift. They gave me a sweater; they made me gloves and.... Anything they can give to a young recruit to go in the army, I surely was presented with all of those gifts. The Odd Fellows were showing their good intentions. I felt as though I was like a member of the family. And at the same time in the mind of the man I was working for, I think it was keeping me off of the streets! [laughter] That was a good thing for him and for me, both.

Did you try to get any of your friends or relatives to join the Odd Fellows?

Yes, and in the years gone by I had many friends that joined the Odd Fellows on account of me kind of recommending them. Some stayed put, and some dropped out for not paying their dues, and some of them moved out of town. But I did my share toward trying to repay them for the good that they did for me. And I think they were pretty well rewarded.

Were there many other Italian Americans who belonged to the Odd Fellows at that time?

Oh, yes, there was Uncle John Gotelli, the Semenzas, the Depaolis, Maggolo and

Trozi...quite a few of them. And it's a good organization as a whole for working men. The dues was a dollar a month, and the initiation was \$25, and from time to time they would have a banquet that was charged by the lodge that you didn't have to pay a dime for. So, actually, you get your money rewarded as far as the banquet is concerned—free of charge. And, like at Christmastime or different times of the year, they would celebrate by giving dances or something to entertain the young fellows like myself. We had dances with the Rebekahs. The organization was not expensive, and it was very kindly, and you become acquainted with some of the people that you're doing business with in the daytime. But you feel different when you meet at night in a social affair.

Can you remember anything notable that the Odd Fellows did in terms of civic responsibility here in Reno prior to the First World War?

Well, they put up different buildings. They put up a building on the corner of Commercial Row and Sierra Street that was called the Reno Mercantile store. That was quite a large store in the early days. They financed the building. They bought the land; they put up the building; then it was rented out. They had 2 or 3 buildings. Right offhand I don't really know just exactly where they were located. I did know that when the reporter came along and he interviewed in the lodge, that they had so much revenue from different buildings. And matter of fact, they had revenue from the cemetery. They got an Odd Fellows cemetery up in Reno that's been in existence for many, many years. Any member of the order is entitled to be buried in a place in the Odd Fellows cemetery. And right joined to Odd Fellows there is also the Masonic fraternity that had a cemetery jointly.

Did your family have any tradition of membership in Masonry?

I have been a Mason and a Shriner for over 60 years, but my family...being back in the old country in Italy, the whole nation was a Catholic affair, and there was not a connection with anybody else. There was no chance to join any other organization outside of the Catholic church.

Well, there were some that were underground organizations in Europe.

In the early days, in the city, yes, but not out in the country where the community is dictated by the priests. There was no possible chance to sneak out from under. [At least one member of the Ginocchio family believes that Andrew Ginocchio's father and grandfather were members of Masonic organizations in Italy.—ed.]

I didn't join any of the churches—not even the Catholic church, even though I was born as one. [chuckles] But I tell you what, in my early days in the line of work that I followed, any church—whether it was the Catholic church or the Episcopalian or some other church—that had need for some iron work in the church, like railing or hand rail or doorsteps or something to that effect...like the Saint Mary Hospital.... There was a lady by the name of Sister Serafina. And every time they put up a school building, she used to come by the shop, and we'd build a cross for her and give it to her as a donation, and she set it on top of this particular school as a member of the Catholic church. And there was a man that was my partner and my cousin, that he was quite anxious to do something for Sister Serafina. For some reason he was very fond of this sister, and the 2 of them would chat sometimes for many minutes. And eventually when she leave, why, he agreed to do something

for her—for Saint Mary's Hospital or some other churches or some other school.

I think it was around 1916 that Jack Dempsey first come to Reno. On Saturday night we used to go around town, but Becker's Saloon on Commercial Row seemed to be the most lively place that anyone would like to go in and have a glass of beer. And this man, Dempsey, come along, and he go to the end of the bar, and then with his hand he hit on the end of the bar, and all of the glasses on the bar raised about 3 inches! [laughter] And he says, "I would fight the best man in the house!"

The man in charge of the bar was a fellow by the name of Harry Heidtmann. He said to him, "Now, look, if you want a drink, I'll give you what you want, but don't come around here to start any fights now." [laughs]

Dempsey says, "I'll take a shot of Old Crow and a beer for chase.

This man, Dempsey, was quite a famous man. However, he wasn't a champion yet at the time, but he was working his way up. I guess in his own frame of mind he was planning eventually to become a champion, and he did. But I was sorry for him an many different ways; later, he had so darn many leeches follow him that they would try to make a living out of what Dempsey was able to produce.

When we see Dempsey walk along the street, in most case he was heading for Tony's [El Patio] Ballroom. When we saw Dempsey coming, we know that sooner or later he'll stop in at the blacksmith shop to see what we're doing. One of the men would take hold of a piece of steel 2 inches square, and he would put it in the fire, and it'd take a good, long heat. And when Dempsey come along, he had the sledgehammer ready for him to strike. It was a 22-pound sledgehammer, quite heavy. And when he pounded on this metal, it would spread in all directions. He was a powerful man; I would say he had more strength than 2 men put together.

IN EUROPE WITH THE UNITED STATES ARMY, 1917-1919

Shortly before America entered the First World War, I went down to the county courthouse to ask Elwood Beemer, the county clerk, for advice on which branch of the armed forces to join. I figured I would be drafted anyway, and I wanted to get in some branch that would be in keeping with my knowledge of blacksmithing and ironworking. Mr. Beemer suggested the Army Engineers. I applied and was accepted about one week before the United States entered the war.

When I went in [the army] the Rebekahs gave me a shaving outfit. Anything that a man would want to go on a trip, why, they surely gave it to me—free of charge—being that I was the only one in the whole Odd Fellows organization that had joined the army. And they were doing all that they possibly knew how to make it pleasant for me.

Your first stop was right up the hill here at the university, wasn't it?

At the University of Nevada. I was assigned Number 13 room in Lincoln Hall.

The one month that we stay there we had 6 hours of training, starting at 6:00 in the morning. We would drill for a couple of hours; then we'd go out for breakfast. And we had one hour off from 8:00 to 9:00, and from 9:00 to 12:00 was more drilling. In the afternoon after lunch, about 1:00, we were supposed to be.... The railroad company had the Sparks shop in full force in those days. And they had in the neighborhood of 1,500 or 1,600 mechanics working down there. Different groups of us were assigned to certain departments. And in my case, I was assigned to the blacksmith department where they were doing welding—electric welding, forge welding, all kinds of welding—and there was a boilermaker shop, and there was a carpenter shop, and there was different units, different places, to work at the shop. We had to work from 1:00 until 4:00, and at 4:00 we would go back to the university and we would march from 4:00 to 5:00. Well, there was buses that didn't take more than 15 or 20 minutes from Sparks to go to the university, but shortly after 23 get out of the bus, we were lining up for one more

hour drilling between 5:00 and 6:00. Then at 6:00 we would have dinner, and after dinner we would have time off till bedtime at 9:00.

There was 250 men, and most of us was volunteers. But at that particular time, they started the draft, and there was many of them that city officials felt as though they should be in the army, so they start to draft them. And those that didn't volunteer, they finally got in with us by being drafted. We were allowed to pick our choice as far as the line of work that we want to do. In my case, since I volunteered to be in the mechanical division, I was assigned to the engineers. I was told that they needed mechanics in France to operate the railroad, and I became one of them.

Were the other people who were with you here all from Nevada?

They were all from Nevada, every one of them. I was a member of the American Legion after the war was over, and they told me that out of 250 there was only 79 that came back to Reno. Some of those boys were lost across the sea; some would die from the flu. In that particular ship that I was assigned to, there was 23 men that in the morning, they didn't wake up for breakfast; they were dead from the flu. Twenty-three of them! And all the rest of the ship that wasn't with us, they all had a loss of anywhere from 25 to 50.

Was that on the way over or on the way back?

On the way over.

Of course, there was a horrible flu epidemic right after the war, as well, in the United States.

Well, yes. It was like one of those nurses was telling us after we got across in France—that instead of calling it Spanish flu, they

should call it German flu. She said that half of those servicemen that had died, died from the flu. [laughs] But since we had no grudge against the Spaniards, they would call it the Spanish flu. And I think she might have had a point in that case! [laughs]

After leaving Reno, did you go to train anywhere else in the United States before being shipped to Europe?

Oh, yes. After the first month at the university, we were divided into 2 groups. Those that had a university education and papers to show for it, they were sent to California to become officers in the different training camps. Those that were just common laborers, mechanics and different lines of endeavor (like in my case), we were sent from Reno to Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indianapolis, Indiana. And we discovered after we got there that it was a great big institution; there was something like 5,000 or 6,000 soldiers out there training day in and day out. If by any chance we had a stormy night, you can almost bet that you'd be called out on parade...about 10:00 or 11:00 at night. You had to go up on top of a hill, have a sham battle, and you get soaking wet. After 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning you get back in the camp, then you go to bed, and 6:00 wake up again and start another day of training—day in and day out. And that lasted for about 2 months. From that point they started to distribute us to different locations.

Many of us found ourselves at Camp Upton, New York, where we had dental inspection. In my case I had a bad tooth that had a cavity. The man in charge of the works was a second lieutenant. He took the second look, and he says, "I better go and consult with the major and see what we're going to do about your teeth." So the man went out, and

the major come along with him and look at my mouth, and the lieutenant says, "Should we put in gold or silver?"

And the major said, "Silver, nothing." He said, "This man will be shot to pieces 6 months from now. Put nickel in. Silver is too good." And that's what they put in to fill the tooth! Well, it was very interesting to start with, but I took it for whatever it was worth and [laughs] let it go at that.

We stayed in Camp Upton 2 weeks, and we found ourselves on a ship ready to cross the water. One Saturday afternoon—I think it was 18 June 1918—we sailed out in view of the Brooklyn Bridge, with its elegant suspension system, and then along in front of the Statue of Liberty, where we all saluted. The officer in command of the ship came along, and he tell us that, "For some of you fellows this may be the first time that you see the Statue of Liberty; and for some of you, it may be the last time, too," he says, "so take a damn good look, fellows!" [laughs] And we did. However, at 5:30 that same night we were attacked by the German submarines just off New York Harbor.

Once you got overseas, you were, I believe, involved in operating the French railroad; is that correct?

Yes, yes. I was a fireman.

You were on a steam engine, as a fireman?

Yes. And, well, my first experience...you know, in the west we had the oil burner, and whenever you fire up a locomotive all you had to do is light the fire, and the oil would create all the fire you'd need. However, when I found myself across the water, they were firing engines with what they called briquettes. It was sort of a coal, shaped 3 inches square;

it didn't exactly have sharp corners, but these briquettes, there was lumps of them, and they had to be put in the firebox with a shovel. But I didn't know how to do it. I would pile up a bunch of briquettes in the middle of the firebox like you're piling up a bunch of sand. However, when the engineer come along, he opened the firebox and he see that I had all of those briquettes piled up in the middle. He start to cuss, Only thing I could figure out at the time, that he was thinking, "He was so dumb or he can't understand. American soldier no good." [laughs] That was me! However, he took a great big long iron poker, and he start to distribute those briquettes in the different corners of the firebox.

Eventually I learned that you had to make a fire just like if you make a cut in blanket—to have it equally divided, equally thick, all the way through the firebox in the corners, as well as in the middle. I soon learned how to do it, and now he didn't have to tell me the second time. But at that time, I didn't have any complaint to make because I had to take it.

He was showing me on the meter that we're supposed to have 65 pounds of pressure, but I don't think we had more than 5 or 6 pounds. There was no pressure to speak of. The 75 flues were leaking water, the fire was dying, and it was time to parti; he was going to show me his watch, [laughs] and we didn't have any steam.

It was sort of a critical point. However, we managed to fire the thing up with the engineer's help. We raised steam the quickest way possible, and we finally took off. Our destination was to pick up this train at the middle section and take it to the front; and that was ammunition, food— anything that the front line deserved. Our line of endeavor was to deliver the goods as safe as you can, if you don't get blown up before you get there.

Did you have the opportunity to do any blacksmithing while you were in the military?

After the war was over and they reclassified all of us guys, then I was assigned to work in the shop as a mechanic. We didn't like the idea too well for the reason that we felt as though the war was over. We did our best, and why send me to do another job which I wasn't particularly interested in at the time? However, I didn't have 2 years out there; I only had one year, and I was classified to work in the shop, which I did. We got along very well to start with, but after 6 months in the shop, the French people would get discharged from their service; and I presume many of them had a job with the railroad, and it looked like they had the impression that since the American was loaning money and managed different things through the French government, they came up with the idea that the Americans were going to take over the railroad. And they were fed up with us. They tell us, "Soldat Americaine, the war is over; go home."

Well, we wanted to go home all right enough, but you can't leave till you're released. We had to stay out there practically the whole of 1919 to produce our share of the work. We had to take down to the seaport the wounded. They called it the brassworks—the officers with all of their medals and so on, so forth—the Red Cross, and there were those in the hospital. And finally we got back in the States, but that was in the fall of the year 1919.

While you were in Europe, did you learn anything that you might be able to put to use in your trade back here in the United States?

Well, actually that was railroad service; there was no particular spot that I didn't know something about the work. However, one point that I thought I should have mentioned:

while the war was going on, we had cannon that were sitting on flatcars tied down with a cable and taken to the front. They would stay on the front about one week, and in a week's time the same cannon would come back to the railroad headquarters. The cannon was blowing up; it was split in the middle. And every time one of those cannon blew up, the man that was doing the firing was getting killed. We killed many of our own soldiers from our own cannon. It seemed as though whoever was making those cannon, they was kind of poorly assembled, and there seemed to be from the general appearance that they were made in 2 halves. The heat and explosion of the powder would cause the 2 halves to separate, and they were sent back to the headquarters of the railroad. I mentioned at the time with one of the sergeants that was in charge of the work that I can put a band on those cannon—one in front and one in the back—and shrink it on tight, that I would save those cannon from being thrown away. After quite a bit of discussion, maybe a month or so later, 2 of those cannon were brought to the shop, and I put the bands on. But shortly after then, we were sent dispatches to go back to the States. Whatever happened, I don't know. That was the end! [chuckles]

You were associating with a lot of foreigners, who, I would imagine, had different techniques of smithing than you were accustomed to.

Yes.

Did you pick up any tips on how to do things that you hadn't seen in the United States?

In some way they would be more of a help; and on the other hand, sometimes they were drawbacks, you might say. Some of those mechanics in the old country, they would do

things in 50 years behind time. When you talk about making a forge welding, they would take a different process; they were slow doing it. And then they would put on a certain type of compound—Borax and so on, so forth. We in the States, we'd just do it in one heat. You take a welding heat and you put the 2 pieces together, and you hit it with a sledgehammer, and it's supposed to be done. In their case, if they didn't take the second heat to stick the 2 parts together, they were not going anywhere; they put it back in the fire, and they were taking a long heat and a slow heat, and eventually you pound it out to the shape that you want to bring to. However, their line of work was doing it twice as long as what we were doing in the States. And matter of fact, I think I was teaching some of those fellows, those Europeans that we had, to do it a quick way, my way, than the way that I learned from them—the way they were doing it. They were doing it sincerely, and they were doing good, and they had the old system, and they were doing point by point without missing one. But in our case we would just sometimes skip that, and put the 2 and 2 together and call it a job—finish, and that's it.

The point that I was interested to learn at the time—as I had in my early days—I was quite anxious to know how they tempered an anvil. Different ones had a different idea, and some of the people that I talked with seemed as though they would tell me in detail, and I took it for whatever it was worth. Then another fellow I would talk to, he'd tell me his idea, and it might have been entirely different than the one I learned before. However, after we were out there—and we liked to go different places to see the country—we went along to a place where they were actually melting metal and making railroad rail and rail for bridges and so forth. And I learned from one particular place...it was 2 Swedes

that had charge of that particular section of the work—when the metal actually comes out of the furnace—and they put it in place where they form it from soft, liquid stuff to become metal, become rail.

In that place they were making I beams—they're supposed to be for bridges—and they would put on the camber. This particular camber was done by.... After they got through rolling the particular beam at a certain degree of heat, they would take it off with a crane and set it out in the field. They would set it standing up, and the bottom part'd be laying on the ground, and it stayed there for 24 hours. It seemed as though the dampness of the ground or the moisture would shrink the bottom quarter of the I beam. Well, at that particular point, I had learned how to put camber on a beam, although I had no connection myself, but I saw the way they were doing. [This particular technique proved useful in construction of the Golden Gate Bridge. See page 181.—ed.]

Did you go to a number of blacksmith shops while you were in the army?

Well, we went to different places and so on, so forth. While we were in Paris sometimes we would sneak out in places just for the purpose to see what was going on. Sometime they didn't let us in the shop at all, especially when we were dressed up in American uniform; they felt as though we were more of a drawback than could be a helper, which they were right. [laughter] But some places, they let us in to see what they were doing. And there were some interesting places.

One thing about it, I notice from those European people, they're not in a hurry to produce anything quickly. They take their time. If today alone wasn't enough,

tomorrow's another day; they'd carry on the same project. In this country we do different: it seems as though when you start a job, you want to get it done as soon as possible so that there can be some profit on the end of the works. But in their case, it seemed as though the money part is a secondary affair, while the craft is the number one item. [chuckles]

Did you ever take a leave to Italy while you were in the service?

Yes. While I was in the service I was trying my best to get to take a trip to see my folks. At that particular time I was only in the States from 1910 to 1918. And I went to the sergeant and told him that I'd like to get a pass to go to Genoa, Italy. It seemed as though weeks and days went by, but I was getting no answer. Finally, one day, the sergeant said to me, "I'll tell you how you can get there, but you've got to take it on your own." He says, "You can get a pass to go to Paris, which is easy to get. Nine or 10 days is the limit. When you get to Paris, instead of getting off of the train, why, keep on going until you get to Italy." And I did.

That following week I got a pass to go to Paris. I got myself ready to go into Paris, but instead of getting off the train, I stayed on the train, and we traveled the whole next day to the south of France. There was a place where there was a tunnel from France into Italy. And when you get out of the tunnel, the first city that you run into, they call it Udine. It was quite a large city. They had military police and they had guards, and since it was shortly after the war, it seems that it was all a military affair.

As I got to the depot, I was trying to buy myself a ticket to go to Genoa, which is a short distance from Udine. The lady that was selling ticket asked me what I had to show for myself, that I had a right to go to Genoa. I had a pass

to go to Paris, but after I showed her, she knew more about the paper than I did! [laughs] She tell me those papers are no good! She didn't want to sell me the ticket, and the train was ready to leave, so I got ahold of my grip, and I just run down. There was sort of a narrow point, and the fellows start to stop me. I said, "To hell with you!" And I kept on going and hang onto the train, and I finally got inside. Boy, that train was jammed—everybody sitting down and standing up.

The conductor come along; he called for tickets. Of course, when he got to me, he sized me up, and I sized him, too! [laughter] He asked me for the ticket. And I told him, "I haven't got one."

I show him that pass to go to Paris; he took a look, but he gave it back to me; he says, "It's no good." He says, "I'll put you off of the train."

And I says, "If you do, you'll come down with me." I had made up my mind that I was just going to grab him, and if I had to go down, why, he'd come with me, surer than heck! [laughs]

And he took the second look when I told him that if he put me off the train that he come down with me. He decide to charge me 20 francs. I gave him the 20 francs; then he put a ticket in my cap, and I went along. So I had no trouble from that time on.

However, when I got to Genoa, I went home, and I only had time to spend 5 days with my family. I had to have the rest of the time with a day to spare to get back to where I was located in France without having any trouble. I didn't want to be a deserter. Of course, the company was telling me they were ready to cross to get back to the States.

Had things changed very much with your family?

No. While I was there, I enjoyed the visit and so on, so forth. At that particular time,

when I first joined the service, I had made an allotment to my mother to get a share of my paycheck. When I was asking her if she got it, she tell me that since I had another brother—Louie, an ally in the Italian army—that they were taking the money from me and they were sending it to the other son that was in the hospital that was wounded in north Italy while the war was going on. She said they were thankful to get the money; however, they take it from one hand and give it to the other. [laughs] Try to help the one that was in the hospital.

After 5 days, I got back to the railroad company. However, a friend of mine that went to school with me in the early days (he was also a first cousin) was quite familiar with conditions, and he asked me how in the world I managed to get home. He said in Italy they're not allowed to go from one state to the next. Essentially, he was honest with me. I told him what I did, and he says, "You took a chance to go to jail," he says. "If they arrest you, it's 5 years in jail for you. How are you going to get back?"

I said, "I'm going to get back the same way I came here." I said, "I'll try my best."

So he thought he'd do me a favor. He was an officer; he was a captain in the medical department. He bought me a ticket, and that ticket was good from north Genoa to go to Paris—on his own expense. And I sat along that time among military police and all the other guards that they had at different places; essentially they saw the ticket I had in my cap—there was not a word said to me from anybody.

He was an officer in the Italian army?

Italian army, yes. The man was my first cousin and the family were neighbors for many years. His name was Ceresola. Both

he and his wife were medical doctors. And I say he did me a favor...it's a bigger favor to me now than it was at that time. At the time I didn't think it was...just a personal favor, but I didn't think so much of it. But now when I look back, it actually was a favor, because if I'd've got caught—which very likely I might've got caught—a jail term was for me. [chuckling]

One night, toward the end of the war, instead of delivering food, ammunition, et cetera to the war zone, we were assigned to a special train in another rail line, entirely different than the ones we were used to. We had 7 cars. We were told we would meet, at 12:00 midnight, German officials. They were to come into our own train. A group of us plotted to kill these Germans. We had been told, and chants had been sung, "Bring home Kaiser Wilhelm's head!" We intended to do just that. It was mentioned to the captain. He called us immediately, saying that if we wanted to see the Statue of Liberty again, to do nothing! He said we would be shot on the spot and that we would be no heroes. The 2 trains met, nose to nose. The Germans, heavily armed, got into our train. The bodyguards were over 6 feet, 6 inches, surrounding all officers. French guards were holding the second line, and the American guards were the third line of defense. They entered the box car and we later, peacefully, went on to Versailles, arriving at daylight.

CALIFORNIA INTERLUDE, 1919-1930

In the end of 1919, around November, I returned to the United States. I had applied for United States citizenship in 1916. It took 2 years. Two years later I was in France, of course. Upon my return to this country following the war, my final papers were issued. I became a citizen of the United States in 1919.

After I got back to Reno, the place where I was working, it was sort of running down. George Armstrong had sold out, and there was 2 fellows—one was a German. And since the Germans didn't have too much of a good standing in Reno at the time, they had nothing to offer me as far as getting a job. I sort of had a traveling fever from the time I spent with the railroad, and from Reno I went to San Francisco, where I worked for Union Iron Works for a week. Then I went to Stockton.

I stayed in Stockton maybe 2 weeks, and worked for that fellow by the name of Bigelow, who fabricated tractors. And I was working with the fellow—he was much older than I was— and he said in the afternoon he had a headache, and he put the hands around across

his forehead. And I kind of sympathized with him; I says, "Well, as far as my health is concerned," I says, "so far I never had a headache."

And he looked at me kind of surprised; he said, "Hell, you haven't got anything in your head to ache!" [laughter] And I think he was right!

You had worked for one week at Union Iron when you got out of the army. Why only one week?

You know, while I was in the service I was connected with the railroad, and you catch a sort of a traveling fever. You can't stay in one place too long—you want to go, you want to see, you want to.... And for me to be tied down there in San Francisco, working at the forge.... He was a good man, and he was giving me a decent job. I had no complaint to make as far as the job being too hard or too dirty or not that I could handle. I could handle it very nicely, and when I look back today, I say, "Therefore, why didn't you stay put?"

But in those days, I thought I better go back to Reno. I had a lot of ties, a lot of connections. Up in Reno I know everybody; I thought I did. And for me to be down there, tied up at the forge, and then I didn't know where to go after I get out of work. I thought I was in the wrong place.

And you went from there to Stockton and spent some time there?

From there I went to Oakland. But I just did a lot of running around in Oakland; I didn't stay, and I went to Stockton. And I worked briefly in Stockton for this Bigelow.

And then back to Reno?

Well, then I went to Sacramento. It was one Saturday noon, and I was actually heading for Reno; and in Sacramento on the main streets, I passed fellows that by sizing up in their faces, I thought I'd known. I thought that their faces looked very familiar. And as I passed by, one of those fellows, he looked back and he says, "Is your name Andy?"

And I says, "Yes." And you know, it happened that those 2 boys and me was in the same company in the army across the water. In the same company! But, when you see 2 men dressed up in uniform, you know them as soldiers, and then you see them dressed up in civilian clothes...outside of the look in their face, I couldn't figure out who they were. But when this man asked me if my name was Andy and I say, "Yes," then we became known to each other that we were in the same company.

Well, anyway, those days was during the Prohibition. And one of those fellows, he said to me, "Would you like to have a glass of beer?"

And I says, "Yes!" [laughs]

He says, "I'll take you to a place that's just one block from the police department. But I know the words," he says, "and I'll get you in on my word."

So, we go out there, and we walk 4 or 5 blocks to get to this place. He had to whisper his word through a hole in the wall in there. Whatever he did say, I didn't know, but the man opened the door, and I got in with these 2 fellows. We were hardly in there 5 minutes that we all ordered a glass of beer, and a man come from behind me, and he said, Let me have it." So he take my glass of beer.

And I said, "Well, if you need any work done that I do," I said, "take it." But he was a Prohi. [Federal revenue agent—a prohibition enforcer.] He had a bottle with a funnel, and instead of drinking the beer, he put it into this funnel—that was evidence that they were selling beer.

Well, that wasn't all. There was a couple other fellows with him. They were ornery people, and first thing you know they start to throw rocks in a mirror. They broke up all that saloon. And the man that was behind the bar, he must have had some whiskey; whatever he had, he threw it down in the sink and he tried to do away with it. But they arrested him, and they tried to arrest us, too. And myself and these 2 fellows, we had to talk like a Dutch uncle to let us out free, because we were just discharged from the army. I don't think it was a month we were discharged, and we didn't want to find ourselves in jail in Sacramento! [laughs] Well, we got out, and it was a long time since I had another glass of beer. [laughter]

One of my 2 army buddies said to me, since I was heading back to Reno, "You stay another day." He says, "I'll take you to work for a place that they're doing nice work, and

a man that's a good friend of mine." And he says, "I'm sure that he give you a job."

So he took me to this company, S. S. Allbright, where they were building school buses, and he introduced me to the man in charge. After we got to talk to him a little bit, he asked me how much money I ask for. "Well," I says, "I'm not familiar with the wages, but whatever you pay the other fellows...I don't expect you to pay me any more, any less than the other fellows."

He tried to find out how much I want, and I says, "I'll tell you what I'll do: I'll work for you for a week, and if I like it, I stay; and I don't like it, I go. And if you don't think I'm worth the wages that the other fellows get, well, you don't have to pay me any more, any less." I was hired and I worked 5 years for S. S. Alibright. It was a very nice job, and that was a job that actually was interesting.

At that particular time the streetcars and the buses, it looked to me from what I was told and what I saw with my own eyes that there had to be an engineer to operate the vehicle and a conductor. The conductor had to open and close the door every time one wants to get in and one wants to get out. The man I was working for, he asked me if I can figure out some way that the man that operated the bus could open and close his door without having to have the conductor be right there in this job, which takes 2 men to do instead one. And I came to the conclusion—by making different sketches and different drawings on my own—that you could plant the bracket on the dashboard in front of the driver's seat. I had a lever made with a sort of a half circle... you take this lever, and you shove it one way; you open the door, and then you shove it back and you pass the center—it locks itself. You didn't have to have a key or anything of the

sort to lock it. After you pass the center point, shortly, it stop right there and it stay closed on its own.

This man that I worked for got a patent on it, and for 10 years he derived royalty, which I never got a penny for it! [laughs] I didn't know that he even had the thing patented, but from that time on every bus that we were making, I was the man that had to make the ironworks and so on, so forth to open and close the door—which became very simple. But in the latest years they came along with the hydraulic system, so when the hydraulic took place, the mechanical part was dismissed.

While employed at S. S. Allbright I attended a Rebekah Lodge affair in Sacramento, and on that particular night they were giving dances. There was a girl there who also worked at S. S. Allbright. Her name was Viola Chilton Barnes. I thought she looked kind of nice, but I didn't know her from Adam. I managed to get close to the point where I had a chance to ask for a dance, and we did have a dance. And I thought I'd like to be able to arrange it so that I can meet her again; however, I didn't know whether I was trying to be too brave for my own experience! [chuckles]

When the dance came to an end, I told her that I hope that we meet some more. She says, "Oh, they give dances quite often. There may be another dance maybe a month from now," she said.

And I says, "I'll be there!" And sure enough, I was there, and then she was there, too. [laughs] And it took us about a couple of years' time, but however we begin to get to the point...we finally got married.

My wife's parents, at one time, were well-to-do people in Durham, England—English people who, however, I never got to know. She never did know too much about her ancestors. Her father was a master car builder with the

Southern Pacific in Sacramento. He stayed in there until he retired. Well, when he retired, he felt as though he was going to take life easy, that he was going to enjoy and see the world. But his life from the time that he retired until he passed away, it only lasted 2 years. The first stop that he made was Eugene, Oregon. He had some people that he knew up there, and he visited with them for 2 or 3 weeks. He took sick, and he came back to Reno, and he stayed with us for 2 or 3 months. Then they decided to go to Oakland. He had a daughter that was marrying in Oakland. He stayed at her place 2 or 3 months, and there he took sick and he passed away.

In 1921 or 1922 I became a stockholder in the Bank of Italy. That particular bank, in those days was like a mushroom growing off of a desert, you might say. It was surprising even to the American people that all at once a great big bank got up in San Francisco out of nowhere, you might say. This fellow Giannini [Amadeo Giannini, the founder of the bank] was doing good as long as he stayed within the state of California. But somewhere or other he got mixed up with those eastern banks in New York City. Whatever did take place, I never did know, but I think they took him for a ride; they broke him up in business. But as long as he was just the Bank of Italy in San Francisco, he had all of the Italian and included all of the European people—the German people and the French people and the Swedes—they all had an interest in that Bank of Italy. If they had \$1,000 to deposit, they would give it to the Bank of Italy. [By 1930 the Bank of Italy had 280 branches nationwide. In that year it was renamed the Bank of America.—ed.] But as I said, in the latest years, when he got mixed up in New York City, I think they had it in for him. I don't know what the score was, but they just broke him up in business.

I had shares that I had bought for \$25 a share, and the last share that I bought from the Bank of Italy was \$365 for one share. When I was getting my dividend every 6 months, instead of me cashing it in and using the dividend, I would add another \$25 or \$30 and buy another share; or if I had enough money I'd buy 2 or 3 shares and so on, so forth, until I had 113 shares. At that time, every traveling salesman or doctors or anybody that had more brains than I had...and I would talk about the Bank of Italy stock. Everybody predicted that by Christmastime that stock would be worth \$1,000 a share. And I had 113 shares, and I said to myself, "\$113,000!" I was about 32 or 33 years of age—I says, "I'll be rich."

In the meantime, the wife was a member of some ladies' club, and then she was attending this ladies' club. And one day, while we were having lunch in the house, she said to me, "You know, if I were you, I'd take that stock that you have in the Bank of Italy and cash it."

And I looked at her with kind of a surprised face; I says, "You're crazier than hell. Everybody talk about the stock being worth \$1,000 a share at Christmas." I think it was September or October [chuckles], and I says, "Why sell it now? It starts to pay good dividends," I says, "and everybody goes for it. I'm not going to dispose of it."

Well, it seemed as though she didn't want to tell me, but she got wind from somebody that sooner or later that bank is going to go haywire. And she knew. But it didn't penetrate through my head, and I didn't believe her. Finally, sure enough, we didn't get to Christmastime. I think it was November or sometime; the kids in the streets were yelling their heads off, "The Bank of Italy's stock crash!" [laughs] I was sound asleep, and she waked me up and says, "Go get the newspapers." She says, "There's something about the Bank of Italy."

Well, I get up and go out there, turning on the porch light, and one of those kids come to me. Sure enough [chuckles] , I bought this newspaper, and “the Bank of Italy stock crashed”—great big black letters, you know? I didn’t hardly have the newspaper, and she wanted to know what was in the newspaper! [laughing]

She says, “What did I tell you? You knew all about it. Now, there you are!” She said, “Chances are they will not be worth the paper they’re written on.”

And sure enough, it was maybe a month later around Christmas that the Bank of Italy stock was at \$7 a share, but nobody wanted to buy it...and I had paid \$365 for one share.

How did you become a stockholder to begin with? What attracted you to the Bank of Italy?

I had a fellow work with me that he got the dividend, you know, and he showed to me this check. He says, “It’s the first money that I made that I didn’t have to work for.”

And I said, “How did you do it?”

Well, he says he bought Bank of Italy stock. At that time they didn’t have their place in Sacramento; they had it in Stockton. So one Saturday afternoon, we went down to Stockton, and we bought some of that stock. That’s when I paid \$25 a share. From there on we kept on buying. That’s when I got married; that’s when I bought Bank of Italy stock.

After we were married, I felt as though since my wife had experience as a bookkeeper, that I would go in business for myself instead of be working for somebody. And on Saturday afternoons—at the time we were working through Saturday noon; we had the afternoon off—we were going different places in the Sacramento vicinity. I ended up in the town of Lincoln, that had a clay factory; they were working 1,500 or 1,600 people. There was a

garage there that had a Chevrolet agency, and I bought half interest in the garage with the agency. Also, at that particular time, I was kind of fond of Buick automobiles. With the agency of the Chevrolet I took on the Buick agency out of San Francisco. And in a year’s time I thought I was doing very well. I was able to sell quite a few Buick cars.

My wife had high school and 4 years at Northwestern University. She was studying law; she knew bookkeeping; she was very capable. In writing up those Buick contracts, I think that she knew exactly what to do. It was made in the proper form and in a nice way that there was no dispute or no argument.

I would imagine that it cost you a considerable sum of money to buy a half interest in that Buick dealership.

No, it wasn’t too much as far as the dollars and cents were concerned. I had an uncle at the time that had a ranch in Sparks. I had \$2,000 on my own; then I borrowed \$5,000 from him, and I was able to pay him back in 2 years’ time.

What year did you buy the dealership in?

That was 1925 when I bought the place.

Can you tell me what made your agency successful?

Well, it so happened, I think, that sometime you talk about God provide for you.... I think it was some kind of hands above my head so as to guide me through. It turned out so that in that particular time in Lincoln, on the south side of the city, there was a lot of fruit growers. They had a good crop, and they were getting good money for their crop. On the north and west side of the city there was

more of a stock grower, and they had good stock, and they had good fortune to raise plenty of calves and sheep and whatever they were raising, and they had a good market; they were getting good money. In place of them buying Fords or Chevrolets, I was able to sell my Buicks. Families that had nothing else but Chevrolet, as they got a little more prosperous, they bought the Buick. So that's why [chuckles] for the territory that I had, it was sort of surprising to the San Francisco dealer that I was able to sell as many cars as I did.

For some reason the San Francisco agent must have got in touch with the factory at Flint, Michigan, and told the factory people that for the territory that I had to sell automobiles, I did as good as San Francisco did in their territory or as Los Angeles did in theirs. It was kind of interesting to the factory that I was able to sell that many cars in the lot that I was allowed to sell. They told me that I can have a free trip to the Buick factory for one solid week, tell them my experience of selling Buick automobiles—which I did with the wife at the time, and we had this young daughter, Andrea, and she was one year old at the time.

We went to Flint, Michigan, and I saw how they were making Buick automobiles from the first day, when they start, until the end of the week you see the same automobile go out on the factory rails—complete, ready for sale. It was very interesting, and it was very educational. There was a great big room, where they were making nothing else but AC spark plugs. There was nothing but women, and each one had their own line of endeavor; it was just a clockwork. At a certain time they take and hold a certain thing and go so far and pass it over to the next, until it got to the place that it was cooked and baked and taken the procedure that they had to take.

They were packing the spark plugs 6 in a box, and that was the way the spark plug was made.

But the making of the hood and the making of the crankshaft...it was surprising to see a hunk of steel about 3 inches in diameter—and at that time they were making 6-cylinder automobiles, and I think the length was something like 36 inches—and in 2 heats they would make a crankshaft. When at a certain degree of heat, they put it on the dies; and they were making different shapes for different cranks and so on, so forth. And the second heat, they were putting the bearing places and so on. They would twist the crank shaft in one heat, and when the crankshaft got cold, it had to go into another machine shop where they were giving it the final treatment, and from there to the lathe, where they do the final finishing, so on, so forth. The camshaft and the valves and different parts that there was to making the motor, and the way they were pouring and casting, and the way the cylinder blocks were made—actually, when you talk about learning things in a hurry, that one week at Flint, Michigan, I learned more than I did many years before and after in my line of experience.

Were you ever able to apply those principles to the work that you did here?

Well, to a certain extent. I never tried to make a crankshaft of an automobile....

I don't mean that. I mean the whole idea of specialization in labor, assembly line techniques.

Even to see how hot the metal got at certain degree of heat...and not to get to the point of doing any welding, but to get to the

point to where you can bend the metal with out doing any damage. Sometimes you can bend metal, and it gets too cool, and before it gets finished, if you don't look out, you're going to crack the job that you started to make. Instead of making it, you are ruining one, because when you get to a certain degree of heat, the metal gets brittle, and the parts would fall apart if you keep on pounding on it. So you've got to learn....and that particular week, I learned many different lines of endeavor, that they would heat the metal to a certain degree of heat. By seeing how the other fellow was doing it, it kind of gave me an IQ of how to do it in the years to come, regardless of what the shape or how big the job was.

After I took the trip back to Flint, Michigan, we didn't come back to Reno; we went back to the old country, then. We spent 2 or 3 months over there and visited different cities, taking ahold of different location. Before then I was a member of the Rotary Club in the town of Lincoln, and I had ways to mingle.

The man that I talked to in Flint, Michigan, I told him I was going to take a trip back in Europe, and he wanted me to go in Paris to see what they do with their used cars, and to go in Italy and do the same thing out there and see the principal cities where they had Buick agencies, what they were doing with the used cars.

Well, to me I thought that's a simple thing to do. I didn't think I would have any trouble to find out. I made attendance in Rome; I made attendance in Genoa; I made attendance in Venice, and I made attendance in different cities and different places where they had Buick automobiles, and I made myself familiar with them. But, you know, those people back there, they were anxious to buy used cars. There was families that

actually didn't have enough money to buy a new one, but were willing to buy a used car. They were mechanic enough to know how to take care of the machines. They were able to put the machine in good running order, and sometimes they would give a coat of paint so the machine look like new. the dealers were tickled pink to have a second-handed car to sell, and the buyer was tickled pink to buy it.

In Paris it was the same way. They had some of the early Buicks made in the early days that here in the States they would call a pile of junk. Back there they had that rubber bulb that they were pressing on to toot like a horn, you know? They were pressing this rubber bulb—poo, poo. [laughs] And some of those were making taxis; they were taking people from place to places.

So when I got back to the States, I wrote to the General Motors official, and I told him that those people in Europe would be glad to get those used cars so they can sell them to people that couldn't afford to buy a new one. And one of the fellows, when I got in there, he told me that he knew that, but he thought he'd like to confirm—to see that my statement was the same as what they had learned before. But they already knew it.

When I got back to the States, the condition of the country was considerable worse than it was when I left. In the place where I had prospect for selling the Buick automobile, I couldn't even sell a secondhand Ford. The condition of the country—the farmers as well as everything else in general—it was sort of in downhill condition. This was 1930.

What happened to your agency, then?

At that time there was a fellow that wanted to buy an interest, and I was going

to sell to him, which I didn't get enough money to start with. And after he bought my interest, then I came back to Reno. In the shop that I was originally with in 1910, 1911, one of the partners passed away, and this second cousin of mine that was in the shop at the time came down to Lincoln; he wanted me to get back to Reno. He didn't know what the condition of the automobile game was, but I was glad to get back to Reno, because there was no money to be made selling automobiles. So I've been in Reno ever since 1931.

RENO AND THE RENO BLACKSMITH SHOP, 1930-1941

At that particular time, a cousin of mine, John Ginocchio, that was in the Reno Blacksmith Shop in Reno lost his father-in-law, which was a key man in his shop. He came to me and he told me that if I wanted to buy the widow's interest, he would help me to get it fairly reasonable; that he would like to have me come back to Reno. Under those conditions I just took up the proposition that he made to me, and I gave up the Buick agency. That is, I sold to a fellow, but I didn't get very much money for it. I decided to come back to Reno, and I've been here ever since.

What was the name of the widow and her husband from whom you bought the share?

The man's name was John Bottini. Great, big husky fellow. And he died quite young; I think he was 56 years of age when he passed away. His wife and he only had one daughter, and she was Mary. And I did buy the interest for a reasonable amount. I don't remember exactly, but I think it was in the neighborhood of \$7,000 for the half interest, which was a

good bargain. I think it was worth probably double that amount.

When you returned to Reno in 1930, did you find that the old neighborhood around the blacksmith shop had changed?

Well, it had to a certain extent. The places where buildings were sometimes would be an empty lot in the middle of the block. It would turn out that they had these miniature golf courses sometimes, which we never heard of any before, but after the First World War there was a lot of miniature golf courses all over the city—not only Reno, but in California and many other places.

It turned out to be so that a lot of people would travel more then. It seems as though the First World War put the traveling fever in many different ones, including me. I didn't know where I wanted to go, and I didn't know for any particular reason, but I just had the notion to go from one place to the next, just to be going places. I had that while I was in the railroad service in France. We want to go

to see the next town, which practically there's no difference from the one you left, but just the idea to see the different lines of endeavor of different people.

When you left Reno in 1918, the area around the blacksmith shop—as I take it from what you were telling me before—was more or less an Italian neighborhood. Is that correct?

Yes, it was.

Did it remain an Italian neighborhood into the 1930s, after your return?

No, they changed a lot.

Tell me how it changed.

Well, like I say, many different lots, you know, maybe belonging to some Italian or maybe other people, they put up this miniature golf course. And it seem as though miniature golf courses were taking up all of the spaces in the city—and then not only in Nevada and Reno, but all over the West Coast: I am satisfied to say from Chicago to the Mexican border.

Were there still a lot of Italian families living in the neighborhood?

Well, not as much as there used to. In the first place, in the early days, the country in the past was open to anyone. If they didn't like to stay where they were born and raised, they go places. But in the latest years, they put restrictions on immigration. In 1930 I would say there wasn't half of the people that used to come from 1910 to 1930. And from 1930 to this time, it got worse. It was only probably the Chinese people that more or less they had freedom to come, and the Japanese,

and probably the Mexican. But the European people, they were more or less shut down...the immigration got to be something of the past and something that there was a restriction. And there were not so many foreign people coming into the States like there used to be before 1910.

[Regarding the decline in the number of immigrants into the United States in the 1920s and 1930s, Mr. Ginocchio is quite correct. However, his impression that Europeans were hardest hit by restrictive immigration laws is without foundation. To the contrary, the National Origins Act of 1924, which made permanent the temporary quota law of 1921, discriminated principally against non-Europeans. A ceiling of 150,000 immigrants per year was imposed. Quotas for each nationality group were limited to 2 percent of the total members of that nationality listed as residing in the United States by the 1890 census; however, Western Hemisphere aliens were exempt from the quotas. One provision of the act, prohibiting the immigration of aliens ineligible for citizenship, effectively terminated Japanese immigration. In 1922 the Supreme Court, in *Ozawa v. United States*, had ruled that Japanese were ineligible for naturalization.—ed.]

Did the old Europa boardinghouse still stand when you came back in 1930?

Yes, but in the short time I was there between '30 or '35, the different roads and the streets more or less got bigger, and they had to have more space. The Europa Hotel was sort of an old, ancient hotel. It was a long way from being up to date, and rather than spend considerable money to rejuvenate the place they tore the building down. However, next door to the Europa, that was what they called the Toscano Hotel, which is still up

today. They did spend considerable money, which we supplied the steel for it—they made nightclubs out of it.

Now, in the early days, there was no such a thing as a nightclub. There was gambling joints, but as far as calling it a nightclub where you could take your wife or friends and spend the evening, dinner, dancing—before 1910 there was no such a thing. And the people, for some reason, they go in different stages; whatever took place in 1930, they're not doing the same thing today.

What about the Armstrong Manufacturing Company? Was that still in operation?

He had sold the place to 2 German people, and on account of the States having war with the German people, they just naturally died of their own starvation, you might say. They had no more business when I got back from the army. They didn't have enough work to keep themselves busy—there was 2 of them.

When I came back to Reno in 1930, we bought a home on the corner of Arlington and Reno Avenue—which I still have. My daughter, Andrea, grew up there and she went to school at Mount Rose School. As the years went by, in the same school where she started out as a student, she turned out to be a teacher, teaching in the same room in the same class.

When she was growing up, I know my own intention was to make her an architect. I thought that I would use her very well in my line of business. But...well, the wife, as well as the daughter, they felt as though the architect was a man's job; that I was looking for something pretty much out of the line of a woman to be taking up architecture. However, it wasn't so many years later, different students that I happen to know, they did take up architecture in Reno, and they kept on going even to this day. However, in her case, she turn

out to be a schoolteacher; she decided to be a teacher. And one of her first jobs was to teach school in the same place where she was as a pupil at 6 years of age! [laughs]

And, of course, now she runs your business.

Well, after she got married—that's when she became Mrs. Pelter—they went to Seattle, Washington. She taught high school for 6 years in Seattle; then they moved down to San Jose, California, and she taught school down there until they decided to come back to Reno. That's when she start to work for me in the shop...1972.

Beyond the old neighborhood, life in Reno must have changed a lot in the 13 years that you were away.

It did change a lot.

Can you describe for me some of the changes that had occurred in Reno, and the differences that you noticed when you came back in 1930?

Well, the town of Reno, although it's still a gambling town to this day, that wasn't exactly the main line of endeavor. The main line of endeavor, when I came back in 1930, it was the divorcee people. And [because of Prohibition] there was a lot of people that were manufacturing beer and whiskey; every man in the state, you might say, they were fabricating [chuckles] beer and whiskey. And under those conditions, I thought it was a whole lot different than the time when I left. The time I left Reno the country was open, so there was no such a thing as a place where they fabricate all sort of booze. And the lawyers, they were quite big promoters. They preferred to have the country dry for the reason that every time someone get knocked over by the

Prohi, they had to go to a lawyer to fight the battle, and the lawyer would get whatever cash that they had available to get them out of jail. The town was actually different from when I left in 1918. However, as I went along, even the divorcee business declined. To this day a fellow can get divorced, but they're not one of the latest lines of endeavor, as far as business is concerned.

At the time of your return to Reno, did the Reno Blacksmith Shop have any moonshiners for customers? Did you make anything for these distilleries, help them out in any way?

Like I say, it seemed as though that the lawyers as well as many...particularly the farmers, if the condition of the crop wasn't too good, they make up by fabricate some moonshine and sell it at a fairly decent price, [laughs] and somehow they got along very well without getting caught in a trap. And some people, sometime they were turned in by someone, probably the neighbor, that had jealousy that he was making money and they were not. They would squeal on...tell the Prohi that so-and-so at a certain place, a certain address, if you keep an eye on it, you'll catch him.

That's what the Prohis were looking for—to have a lead of where to go to—and sure enough, they would land the men. Right offhand, the person that get caught, he had to have a lawyer. If he got in jail, why, he had to have a lawyer to get him out, and then he had to face a lawsuit that they had to fight because it was violating the laws and why he was doing it. And the lawyers, they were more in favor of the dry country than to have it open.

At that time, the divorcee business was quite famous in Reno, and they were coming in from all over the United States. First, it was 6 months; then it got to be 60 days to stay

here in order to get a divorce. However, as the country got wet so that they didn't have to fabricate booze any longer, and the divorcee in some way lost...the lawyer kind of lost their line of endeavor. We don't have half as many divorcees coming in to Reno now for divorces as they did even 10 years ago.

The question I had asked you was whether or not the Reno Blacksmith Shop was ever involved in any way with making things for the stills.

Well, we were making beer vats. When the steel salesman come along from San Francisco looking for an order, we had it right there, black and white. We bought a bunch of sheets of plates, say, a quarter of an inch thick, 4 foot wide and 8 foot long. And that would make the bottom and the 2 sides, and the fourth sheet you cut it in the middle to make the 2 heads. So, without having one pound of wasted metal we would make these vats 4 by 4 by 8 foot long and sell it to these people. Sometimes we had to work at night in order to supply the goods to these different farmers, that they want to make beer, but they didn't know what to make it in, and that's what we were making the vat for.

We made some good money, and it was very pleasing to everybody concerned, until they got to a stage one time that the police department telephoned into our shop, and they told us that they got some tanks to sell if we want to buy the metal. And I got ahold of my partner; I said, "You go out there in a certain place by the courthouse," and there was the police department next door, and "see what they got to sell and see if we want to buy it." And it got to the point where they were having these vats for sale; it seemed as though whenever they shipped the steel out of San Francisco, they put the name of Reno

Blacksmith Shop on the sheets, on the plates, and when he went out there to see about those vats, the name of the blacksmith shop was still written all over the tanks! [laughter] When he found out that his name was on the tanks, he didn't waste any time; he came right back. And I asked him, what did he do that he got back so soon; he told me what the score was, that our name was out there on those tanks! [laughter] He didn't bid on the job; he didn't even show up to do any bidding.

They had a whole lot of those tanks, that when they discovered they were manufacturing beer, naturally they got caught, and they had the tank for evidence. However, we never got into trouble as far as making the tanks; we got paid for it, and that was it.

Was it primarily German farmers who were making beer?

The German, actually they were the ones that were making the beer, and the Italian, they were the ones that were making the whiskey. But they got mixed, so there was no time at all that the Italian would make the whiskey and the beer, and so did the German—they had a still. And all of the nationality—there was no particular difference. I don't know about the Chinese people, but the rest, they would fabricate something. Every mine in the country, they were fabricating booze, and the mine was in operation. [laughs]

Did the Italians here in Nevada ever try to make wine?

Well, not so much as far as the wine is concerned because they had to buy the grapes from California. In the early days before the First World War, there was many Italian farmers in particular that would buy one or

2, maybe 5 ton of grapes, and they had their way of making wine just for the family or the relatives. But the price of the grape was going up, and then the First World War came along, and it seemed as though they got into a different line of endeavor, and as far as making wine, that was out—until it got to where the country went dry; then they were making whiskey instead.

well, of course, you have to have something to make whiskey out of. What were they making it from?

Oh, they were making it from any kind of a fruit, particularly peaches. You know, they were buying peaches from California. And any place that any farmer were able to raise a different kind of a fruit, they were able to distill it and make a whiskey out of it. The first crop, they were making wine, and then they were making the second crop wine, and whatever that was left out of the fruit they would distill it and make whiskey out of it.

What about the beer? Can you recall what they were making beer from? Were they bringing hops in from California?

Well, it seemed as though that each one, they were able to make their own beer without ask for any help of any sort. I don't really know what they were making the beer out of, but that there was plenty of it made.

During Prohibition, where was the place to go to get a drink here in Reno?

Well, different bars that were regular saloons in the early days, they had a place. Like, in the basement they would have like one room that would have a wood panel, and then sheet steel attached to the panel so that

they don't break it up with an axe. We help in many different bars, but in the main street of Reno—Virginia street—there was night places that you had to have a password, you might say, but you get in and you get all of the whiskey and drink that you want...wine and so on, so forth. You had to pay the price, but there was no trouble getting it.

Did you have a favorite place to go to?

Oh, we would go any place that were giving business to us for making. We thought that we'd return the compliment by making different rounds. We would go from one place to another on Saturday night and visit the different clubs, just to show that we dared to spend our money with them. And there was a time when we had more than our share of the drinks, too. [laughter]

Was there one bar that was favored by the Italian people over any others?

Not in particular, no. Each one had their own favorite place they would go. This particular bar that I say, like the Becker's Bar, that was...they had a place underground. And they had, you might say, the largest visitor of any. And they were operating not exactly wide open, but pretty liberal.

Two doors down from our shop on the north side, like on the corner of Commercial Row and now Arlington Street, there was a dance hall; they used to call it Tony Pecetti's El Patio Ballroom. That was a place in the 1930s for the lively young men and women of Reno. They used to go in there, and Saturday night they'd have a dance until about 1:00 or 2:00 in the morning, and everybody having a grand time. The admission, in most case, was \$1, but there was a time that he would let people in free of charge, too. He was pretty

generous with his customers. Many sports go in there. They were having a grand time, and after the dance was over, naturally they would go probably for a few drinks and go home. In most cases the good class of people would go home. The rest, they like to gamble, and they would stay up all night, because some of those nightclubs were open 24 hours a day and night.

Tony's El Patio Ballroom was sort of a club for everybody in town in the Thirties. He had quite a large dance hall. Sometimes he had dances even twice a week, but on Saturday night, that was quite sure that anybody who wants to go to a dance, you only had to pay a dollar and you'd get in and stay as long as the dance last. I think the dance end at about midnight or a little after. And Tony was a very pleasant man with anybody that was ready to put on a party or that was willing to share for any kind of a doing. He was a jolly sort of a man, very pleasant.

There was 2 people from Los Angeles come to Reno in the 1930s connected with Twentieth Century Fox. They were trying to put on some kind of a show, some kind of a sporting affair with Tony. We had a Spaniard at work in the shop that sometimes he would sing and hammer at the same time; and this man from Twentieth Century stopped in front of the door, and he listened to that man singing, and he thought it was interesting. I was standing by the door and see him, too. He asked me if he can go out there and talk to the fellow. I said, "Yes, you can go ahead." So he had quite a chat with the man; he left his card.

Well, the Spaniard's name was Jose. And they heard him sing and then tapping on the anvil at the same time. They made arrangements to write him a letter and to get farther in touch with the 2 of them. Eventually he turned out to be a singer for this Twentieth

Century Fox, and he was a famous singer, and he came to Reno at the Majestic Theater. It was understood that he would go to this Majestic Theater and sing a particular song, and when he get to certain place (he had a helper that was working with him in the shop) this helper was supposed to throw a rock in the window, and he did [laughs] with the understanding that Jose was so powerful in his singing that the vibration knocked the glass out. However, one night it turned out to be that the singer didn't hear the window crack. When he got pretty near through with the singing, somebody did throw a rock in the window, but it was too late! [laughter]

Can you remember his last name?

No, right offhand I don't remember his last name. He was a comical sort of a guy. [According to a Reno Evening Gazette article dated 19 May 1936, there was a man named Dick Jose who used to sing while he worked in the W. J. Luke blacksmith shop in Reno. Jose later left Reno to become a famous concert singer throughout the West.—ed.]

Did Tony have a fight ring? I understand that he might have had a boxing ring, as well. Is that true?

Yes, he had. There was a time that, beside the dances, he would give people room to carry on whatever they have. They did have boxing, yes. They would gather around people just the same as they would do at the dance hall, only it was a different line of endeavor. [chuckles]

Was that in the 1930s and 1940s that he had that?

Oh, that carried on from 1930 until 1960.

At one time in the early 1930s—there was a man came to Reno they used to call “Baby Face” Nelson [George Nelson]. He was one of those gangsters from Chicago, and he came to Reno, and he was kind of a gambler. He would go to a place where they were gambling heavy money, and he would be out there with the rest of the gang and gamble money away like nobody's business. He was driving a Packard car, and it happened to be the Saturday afternoon—we were getting ready to close the place—and he brought this car to us. There was the main leaf of one of the front springs broke. He wants a new one put in there, and he wants it in that evening. We told him that it was quite late, if he couldn't wait until Monday. He said, no, he has to have it tonight. So we got hold of a couple of fellows in the shop and asked them to stay to work after 5:00, because 5:00 it would be quitting time, and get that spring made and take care of it that particular night. After he got the spring and everything was ready, when he paid the bill, gave the man that did work a tip of \$9! For this man that was working for me at the time and got a \$9 tip, he didn't know whether it was a mistake—he thought probably it paid for the spring, or how did he get the \$9! [laughs] But we didn't know who the man was until a few days later, that he was the man that came to Reno and got rid of this fellow, Roy Frisch, that was a banker. [Frisch disappeared in 1934 before he could testify in a court case involving organized crime. It was rumored that Baby Face Nelson had killed him and sunk the body in Lake Tahoe.—ed.]

Casino gambling, in general, was made possible by an act of the legislature in 1931, and gambling then began to grow fairly rapidly here in Reno. I believe that there was one Italian who was involved in it, a fellow by the name of Petricciani. Perhaps you can tell me what

you can remember about Mr. Petricciani's involvement in gambling and so forth.

Well, Petricciani was a man that I had to give him a lot of credit for his accomplishment. He worked first for the...I don't know; I think it was on the corner of Commercial Row and Center Street. [John Petricciani was a partner with Joseph Elcano in the Louvre Bar, 204 North Center Street, in the years before the Volstead Act. In the late 1920s he purchased the Palace building at the corner of Commercial Row and Center Street, turning it into a casino following the legalization of gambling in Nevada in 1931.—ed.] In the early day that was the place where the streetcars would stop. That was like a headquarters for the streetcar—right at his front door. I think he had 2 daughters and a boy...maybe he had 2 boys—I'm not too familiar about his family affair. [John's son, Silvio, later managed the Palace Club.—ed.] But Petricciani, he got to the stage when he was working on this Palace Club, that in the course of years he became the sole owner. And it was quite a lot...I would say a million dollars involved in there. He had competition in his line of endeavor; however, he kept on going steady, step by step.

Petricciani was hiring a lot of people, practically more so the Italian descent than others, including...if there was any line of endeavor which I would be connected with—like if a door doesn't swing proper to close and so on, so forth—he would send word up to my shop to send somebody down there to fix that door. He would send word to do different kinds of jobs to repair to the building. And if any time they did remodeling, I always got the job. In some cases I got the job without even asking for a bid. He took my word. He knew that he could trust me, and I was doing my best to give him a square deal, which I did.

But he was always seeking out Italians to do the jobs for him?

Well, yes, I would say he preferred...we had first priority, you might say—the Italian people—with him. However, he was giving other people bids sometime to do their line of endeavor. We didn't have, say, 100 percent, but in my case I says, "I had 99 percent." I became very fond of his way of doing business, and he was paying his bill promptly. Sometimes you do business with people that it takes forever and a day to get squared away financially. In this case, in 30 days' time you'd get your check, and that was it, and he'd paid you in full up to date. I had a lot of respect for the man.

Did you know him before he became prominent in gambling?

Well, I did know him. He was in Reno before I came here; I don't know how many years before I come here. But I start to do business with him in 1912 or 1914, even before the First World War. After I drifted away, he was one of my first customers when I got back into Reno to take a job on the remodeling, whatever he was doing, with this hotel building that he had.

When you knew him before the First World War, what was he doing?

I don't know what his position was, but he was an ordinary worker in the hotel. Like maybe a bartender or somebody that had a little authority, but not to a great capacity, as far as dollars and cents. I don't think he had an interest in the place when he first started to work for the hotel.

How did he ever accumulate enough money to become a...?

Well, he was a shrewd gambler. He knew when to quit. You know, sometimes you make a winning or you think you've got maybe \$1,000 ahead, but if you don't know when it's time to stop, you keep on dishing it out until you finally lose the whole thousand and then maybe more, if you got it to spend. But Petricciani knew how to play the game. Sometimes he would tell his best friends, when they were sitting at the gambling tables...he called them to go out there in his office, then tell them to get out of the club. He was dealing with people that they...sooner or later they're going to take the friends to the cleaners, so he advised them to get out. Now, you know, you have to be a pretty good friend to a fellow when you advise him to try to keep his money, that he's going to be taken.

What part of Italy was he from?

He was from Piedmont; he was from the north. [John Petricciani was from Livorgno.—ed.]

Was there ever any suggestion that he might have had Mafia connections?

No, no. I didn't know about the Mafia until the latest years. But I don't think he ever had any connection at that extent, I would swear to it.

Of course, the general public—those of us who are not Italian—very often make the mistake of believing that the Mafia is Italian, when in reality it's Sicilian.

Well, that's right. It really originated in Sicilia. But since the fellows there are Italian, sometime they would try to accuse them of being a member of it. But to be a member of the Mafia, in the first place they attack the

people with a lot of money to start with. And in second place, after they got them under their wing, my gosh, your life is not yours; it's theirs. They shoot you, kill you, whenever they see fit.

Can you recall any other Italians who were successful in the gambling industry at the beginning here in Reno?

Well, there was a fellow by name of Curti; he had Colombo Hotel for a number of years before the Prohibition, during the Prohibition, then after. [Philip Curti was Antonio Cerfoglio's partner in the Colombo Bar at 231 Lake Street.—ed.] And he was a well-to-do man, too. He was only giving jobs to those that he thought were fairly good customers of his, and we'd done some work in a small way. He always paid his bill, and he was pretty well liked, particularly in politics. The politicians, they'd go to him for handouts, you know—dish out \$1,000 to promote somebody's way to get elected. He was more of a politician than Petricciani. Petricciani wasn't a politician at all. He would try to be in good terms with all of them, and he didn't have any particular...you didn't know whether he was a Republican or Democrat.

In the early days there was a bar owner that was also from the Piedmont. He had only one son that he turned out to be a doctor. There's a building named for him up at the university, and the name of him is Dr. Louie Lombardi. His dad had a saloon in Reno in the early days for many years. [Sam Lombardi owned the Star Barrel House at 236 North Center Street prior to World War I. The establishment dealt fine wines, cigars and liquors, and had an attached cafe.—ed.]

By 1931, I would imagine that things had changed considerably for the blacksmithing

industry. Horses are on the way out; automobiles are coming in....

Yes.

Can you describe for me any of the changes that might have occurred in the type of work that was being done at the Reno Blacksmith Shop?

Well, the change came in a slow way. See, what you were doing, you keep on doing as you go along—only it diminish. It didn't come along with the same kind of a speed, like the repair of the wagon. People, instead of having a wagon repaired, they were buying an automobile. And we, instead of shrinking the tires on the wagon wheels, the wagon wheel disappeared, and the automobile was taking its place. However, we had to shift from repairing the wagon to building truck bodies. Particularly when the Model T Ford come along, there was a time that we would take an old Ford and extend the frame maybe 5 or 6 foot, put a body on the back of the Ford, and they were still using the passenger car that was a Ford at one time—they were making a delivery truck. And we were the ones able to make the changes. But there goes to show right there that we did away with the wagon works, but we got into the automobile works to building bodies. To a certain extent that lasted a number of years.

Did that automobile work that you were doing require that you learn any new skills?

To a certain extent, yes. To start with, you had to know what kind of a load that it was carrying, that you build a vehicle that is not going to have any trouble when they're out on the highway with a load—to sag down and the wheels rubbing onto the body, and you couldn't navigate any longer. That's one

thing that you had to learn, that regardless if they completely overload the truck, the wheels must still be able to turn without interfering with the operation of the vehicle. That's the thing that come along with line of endeavor as you go from year to year. And it turned out all right: as far as hurting our business, I don't think it hurt any. The difference was that instead of work on wagon, it was working on automobiles, trucks and so on, so forth.

How did you learn these new things? Did you learn them through trial and error, or was it possible to study them some way?

We learned by experience. We learned by going day in and day out, and it was no trouble to keep up. We were able to keep up with the changing of the condition of the country.

Shortly after you took over as half partner of the Reno Blacksmith Shop, the country was plunged into a depression. In fact, the Depression had already begun by the time you arrived here. Apparently, there was already a slackening in business due to the fact that some of the traditional things that were done by the blacksmithing firm were no longer in demand, such as shrinking tires and things like that.

Yes.

Coupled with that decline in business, I wonder if you suffered any consequences from the collapse of the stock market and then the failure of banks at the beginning of the Depression?

At that particular time in 1932, we were reading in the newspaper that some of the banks in the East were closing their doors for financial difficulty and so on, so forth. But there was a voice around Reno that as far as the banks of Nevada, the silver state, they had

no trouble, and there was no danger of losing any money through the bank. Those days we were working from Monday through Saturday night, 6 days a week, and we made bank deposits on Saturday afternoon. Normally, I would be the one to gather up whatever cash we had on hand and deposit in the bank. And one Monday morning, why, the newspaper came along and said that the banks of Nevada declare a moratorium; that they're going to be closed for 9 days. Under those condition we felt as though that may be all right, that after 9 days they'd be open again. However, on the tenth of the month we used to send a check to the houses in San Francisco where we buy metal, and we also bought hardwood lumber and different lines of hardware. With the check I enclosed a note that for the time being, the bank was closed, but that in 9 days' time they'd be open again and that the money's there for us to make the check good. However, to make the long story short, the bank never did open up. We had to make good on the check that we had mailed down, and in the course of 6 months' time we were able to get back into normal business. But that one was really the first setback financially that we didn't have any money to pay even a man that was working in the shop.

How many men did you have working in the shop then?

We had 7 men work in the shop and a girl as a bookkeeper. And there was one man that had a wife and 6 children. He come to me one day during the following week; he banged his fist on the table, and had a piece of paper that was in there raised about 6 inches, and he said, "This coming Saturday you're going to pay me, and you're going to pay me in cash!" He says, "That last damn check you gave me last week, nobody wants it, and I have a wife

and 6 children, and I'm not going to let them starve to death for lack of money." He says, "You're going to pay me and pay in cash."

Well, I says, "All right, Mack." And my partner and I, we looked each other in the face and said, "Where in the heck are we going to get the money to pay that man in cash?"

It so happened that this partner of mine knew a cook by the name of Parmigiani, who was working down in Lake Street for the Toscano Hotel. He says, "You know, I'm going to see that cook that work for the Toscano Hotel. He doesn't put his money in the bank. He puts it in a box under his bed." And he says, "I'm going to try to get a thousand dollars out of him." And he asked me if I know where I can get a thousand dollars as far as my part is concerned.

Well, we were doing considerable work for a man by name of George Sauer, who owned and lived at the Del Monte Guest Ranch on South Virginia Street. He was sort of a contractor or an overseer for the county highways in Washoe County. We did some work for him to a certain extent, but whatever I was asking him for was a whole lot more than what he owed as far as the county owe us. However, I ask him that I needed a thousand dollars to pay my mechanics.

Sauer was smoking one of those pipes that had a sort of a gooseneck affair, and it looked to me that it took him forever and day to load up his pipe and get it going. But he finally gets up, and he goes out of the room; then he come back, and he had a canvas bag, and it was full of \$20 gold pieces and \$10 and \$5 and silver. And he dump that bag on the middle of the table, and he said, "There it is." He says, "Pick out what you want, and we'll count it up and see how much it is." So I pick out a thousand dollars, and there was plenty left over. I told him to give me a piece of paper, that I would give him a note or

receipt. And he says, “You don’t even have to do that. Whenever you’ve got the money, pay me back.” And I did. But it took me all of 6 months, if not longer, to make up that thousand dollars. However, when I had that money in my pocket and come back into Reno, I felt I was sitting on top of the world—that I was all well fixed financially! [laughs]

What did you do with the money, then? Did you put it in a bank, or did you keep it out?

No, we kept it. We didn’t trust the banker for quite some time after. We would keep our own money; we didn’t put it in the bank. But later on we had to put it in there in order to have a check, like to send to San Francisco—a firm that we were buying material. You could go to the post office and send a money order, but we went back to the bank; we start to do business the same as we did before.

Of course, it was not uncommon at that time for people to keep their money out of the banks and to make safes to keep it in. Did you make safes?

We did make safes, even for residential people that were building a home. In the basement or someplace in the concrete wall or cement wall, we would make a strongbox, we call it. Sometimes it might have been 18 inches square or maybe 24 inches square, with a door. Sometimes you had to have the key and you had to have a screwdriver to open the door. So if by any chance somebody found the key, you might make a turn, but the door would not open until you turn a certain screw so that the key could turn. And we had the different devices like you do in an ordinary safe today that you got to know the combination; otherwise, even though you might have the key in your hand, you cannot

open it. We made many of those in Reno, and even in the latest years.

In the early days, Nevada Transfer was the only people in Reno that delivered from the Southern Pacific depot your baggage or trunks and so on in different parts of the city. People had to have a license to operate the horse and the cart to deliver this stuff. However, Nevada Transfer also had a warehouse where they were getting the stuff from different ones to keep it in there as a safekeeping. And in one of those there was a safe, which I still have, that was brought down from Virginia City. I think the man was Redman, that kept it in there in that Nevada Transfer warehouse for a number of years until he pass away. After he pass away, the Nevada Transfer didn’t get any more money for the keeping of it, and there is a law that after 5 years you have a right to dispose of the goods, sell it for the storage. They do the same thing today.

This safe came to Virginia City from the Crocker bank in San Francisco. The safe later came from Virginia City to the Nevada Transfer warehouse, and then after 5 years they disposed of it. One of the men that was driving this truck asked me if I want a safe for my business. And I said, “Well, if it doesn’t cost too much, I’ll buy it.” I had to pay whatever the cost was for the 5-year period that the man that passed away didn’t pay for the storage, and I got the safe, which I thought was a good buy.

About 5 or 6 years ago, I thought I was going to sell it for \$100. I had the sale made; I had the hundred dollars, and after I told my daughter she made me go back, give this fellow these hundred dollars, and she still has the safe [laughter] today.

Well, in the 1930s and 1940s there were some very wealthy people who moved into this area, including the Fleischmanns and George

Whittell and some others. Did you build safes for any of them?

Yes, we built a safe for Whittell up at Lake Tahoe. He was a very peculiar man to a certain extent. During the First World War, as I understand, he was a colonel in the army. And he was a well-to-do man; he had money. However, he was peculiar in a certain way. He...well, like he had a lion. He was handling a lion just like he would a dog. And one time they were in San Francisco, in one of the main hotels, and some of the women looked at what he had, and it turned out to be a lion. They start to scream. The lion start to roar! And he had a heck of a time to keep that lion from running away from his hands, understand. Well, now, an ordinary person, you're not going to buy a lion and then go walk into a hotel in San Francisco. You should know before you start that there's a chance you'll get into trouble. But he did, for some unknown reason.

Whittell also had an elephant. They made a barracks out of lumber, and he had this elephant stay in this particular barrack. And it seemed as though that at one time—and it was in the middle of the summer—this elephant went into a rampage, and he run out with the barrack and all on his back, and he took off. And when these people that were looking after feeding the animals...well, there was no more elephant—it was gone, and the house was gone. [chuckling]

One of the contractors that was working up there was named Larson—Larson Construction Company. He sent one of his men to my house at 4:00 or 5:00 in the morning. I get up and see what it was all about. "Well," he says, "Whittell's elephant run away with the house." He says, "You've got to come up and try to take measurements so we can build a steel house for the elephant."

"Well," I says, "all right." So I didn't waste any time—get myself ready to go to the lake, and found out that the elephant was gone, and nobody know where it was. I measured to put up a steel house for the elephant. It took us 30 days or better, and in the meantime they did find the elephant. They put up another shack and tried to keep the elephant in there, but at that time the elephant was under guard, so that somebody had to stay up at night and not allow the animal to run away, and if it did, why, to see where the animal was going. It looked like they had lost the elephant for 2 or 3 nights, that nobody know where the elephant was. But it didn't run very fast, and so he wasn't too far away.

Well, now, this fellow Whittell, I made a safe for him, too—put it in his basement. His was something like 30 inches square. He had a lot of valuable paper, and he even had the swords and stuff that he gathered up from the First World War and was keeping as souvenirs—like the German helmets with the spike on top, you know? Well, he had some of those. One time he took me down in his basement, and he had all sorts of souvenirs, not only for the Germans. He had married a French girl after the war was over, and she was a good cook. She would fix very fine meals at times. The smell of the meal itself, it made you hungry [laughs], including me! And I did a lot of work for him at different times.

There was a time when Whittell would take off; he would go to Los Angeles—take probably a week or longer, and he would go east somewhere. I don't know where he came from, from the East, but there was a time he was gone the whole month. However, he had somebody to look after the construction that he was doing. The general contractor, Larson, was telling me what to do, so on, so forth. We worked up there 3 or 4 summers, in the middle of the summer; from the spring of the

year till the fall of the year, we would have somebody work for George Whittell, putting up buildings. He was putting up gardens, like, or arches. He would have a different sort of a...like a show house. He had a place up there that was very attractive. It cost him a lot of money. He spent a lot of money. But after he passed away, I didn't do any more work for them. I never got any more calls, so that stopped as far as my line of endeavor with him. But we worked, oh, 4 or 5 years during the summer. We built it in 1936, and did all the remodeling including in 1985 for Dryfuss.

Did Captain Whittell come down into Reno very often?

Oh, I guess he was into Reno quite often—him and his wife, and sometimes they had some kind of a foreign dog with them. They always had an animal for some reason. He would stay at the Riverside Hotel, and in the latest years he was staying at the Mapes. He was in Reno quite often.

Do you remember Max Fleischmann?

We worked for them, too. We put up buildings at different places sometimes. But that was just you start one job and you finish it; when the job is finished, that's the end of it for maybe 2 or 3 years. Then you get another call. Fleischmann did some work at the university that we did ourselves. And they were good people; they were respectable people; they were nice people to do business with.

Did you know him personally? Can you recall anything about him?

Not with Fleischmann, no. There would be somebody coming out of San Francisco,

and they would be representing the company. We had a name, I think...one time we had by name Fred Waldren, and he was a very nice person. However, he would just represent Fleischmann.

I know that the Reno Iron Works has been involved in construction for a long time. Was that something that they were doing before you bought half an interest?

The contractors in the city of Reno, they were the one, you might say, put us in the area of structural steel business. They would come along, and they would say, "We want one ton of angle to be set above the door." Whenever you put up a brick building, you had to have above a window, as well as above the door, a steel bar that carried the load of the bricks. And not only the lintel for the door, but they also want a beam probably for spanning the roof or large entrance and so on, so forth.

So different contractors come to me and say they want a beam 12 inches deep and 25 foot long. And I didn't waste any time; sometime if we didn't have it on hand, I would telephone to San Francisco, and I would have it in Reno in 24 hours. That got to go from slow way to fairly good speed forward, you might say. And we got to the stage the contractor would come along with the blueprint, and he'd say, "You give me a price for this beam and for the lintel and for the reinforcing steel in the basement and so on, so forth," so we had to have a man able to read the blueprints and see what's required for the basement, what's required for the first floor and so on, so forth.

We actually got into their line of endeavor really without looking for it. We didn't have no idea that the time come that we had to have an architect or we had to have an estimator, and we had a girl to print the bid so that

whenever they receive a bid, they'd see black and white, the cost of it. Before then, we would sometimes take a job—maybe \$4,000 or \$5,000—shake hand, and then that's the contract. Today it's entirely different than what it was at that time.

What was the first building that you were involved in erecting?

The first building that we put up in Reno was the Mizpah Hotel.

And what year was that?

That was 1931. We stayed in there 6 months or so. And we put up different buildings at the University of Nevada. We put up buildings at Carson City for the state itself. We put up a building in Virginia City. Oh, we put up buildings in different places. We put up a building in Lovelock and Winnemucca, Elko, Lake Tahoe. We put up different nightclubs up at the lake.

Did the construction work that you were doing—the structural steel work—require any expansion of the facilities?

Well, we had to have more room, yes; we had to have more room in Reno. However, from 1934 to 1960, we were associated with Judson Pacific. It was the largest steel house in the West. They were doing steel building all over the state of California. And being associated with them, whenever I had a set blueprints that they had to have a bid up there within a week or 10 days, I would waste no time and get that set of blueprints to Judson Pacific and tell them that a certain day this coming week, I had to have an answer. They were able to give me a quotation, and I would add the cost of the erection, and I was in

position to supply a bid. They fabricated the steel and delivered it on the job, and what I had to do was go on the job with a set of plans and do the erection to assemble the steel. My wife and I read blueprints ourselves and estimated all Reno Iron work without assistance from about 1934 until my wife's death in 1956. I continued estimating until about 1972, and I still estimate small jobs.

Meantime, at that particular time they were building the San Francisco and Oakland Bay bridge; they were also building the Golden Gate bridge. They were using all of the mechanics in the West Coast—from San Francisco to Los Angeles; they were planning on supplying the steel for the bridge, for both of those bridges. And they felt as though they should be able to build the bridge in the West Coast rather than sell it to somebody in Chicago or Pennsylvania; that was usually the case when there was a fairly good-sized job. Instead, we would supply the money in the West Coast, but the steel was fabricated on the East Coast.

We became very close to each other, and we got to the stage at one time that they had a meeting once or sometimes twice a month with all these architects and engineers. At one particular time one night they were discussing putting the camber on the steel beam, on the steel girders. It so happened that it was sort of a puzzle to all of those engineers at the time. Since after the world war, in France, we visited a place where they were fabricating steel, and I saw how to put on the camber. I told them in San Francisco that I know how to put the camber on the beam. That was a surprise, and they all look at me sort of with a surprised face. They didn't know whether I was dreaming or was trying to tell the people if I actually knew about it.

After I explained and so on, I receive quite an honor. It seemed as though I was one of

the youngest men among those engineers, and that I was the only one that know how to put the camber on the girder. And I became sort of an outstanding steel man. [chuckles]

How did you come to be a part of that group?

Well, that's when we were associated with Judson Pacific.

Well, start back at the beginning with Judson Pacific, then. Tell me how you developed that association with them.

Well, the Judson people would come to Reno themselves. They had their own representative. There was a time that they had to have a little help as far as the mechanical affair. They were coming into the shop and asking us before we start that whatever the cost would be to send a bill to Judson Pacific company for the repair of their certain tools. But it wasn't till later that we became associated with them, as I said. We started in 1930 until 1960. At that particular time, it seemed as though there was different foreign people coming in to fabricate steel, and Judson Pacific saw fit to move their plant from San Francisco to Mexico. That's when we cut out the connection, that I couldn't go to Mexico to get a steel price. [chuckling] I had to have it close to home. And from that time on, we started to build our own steel. Judson Pacific became Murphy (now in Emeryville).

As far as the structural steel was concerned, at that time Reno was developing a fairly steady growth. They were putting up buildings not so often, but fairly high buildings, including, in the latest years, the 18-story tall First Interstate Bank building on First and Virginia Street, which at that time was one of the biggest buildings in Reno. Since then, they've put up the Harrah building, for which

we supplied the steel from the basement to the top. We've been supplying structural steel for different buildings around town ever since. And around Lake Tahoe, the many different places like the nightclubs at the lake that had to have structure steel and sign works to put up on top of the building—and all of that line of endeavor being run on from year to year up until the present time.

During the 1930s, when you began to get involved in the construction business, did you have any competitors here in Reno in the business of fabricating structural steel?

No, as far as the manufacturing steel in Reno, there was none. But I had a fellow by the name of MacCauley, who had sort of a shop divided in 2 halves. [Thomas W. MacCauley had an ironworks at 712 East Fourth Avenue.—ed.] In one side he was selling steel, and the other side he was selling different types of glass work—windows, stuff of that that sort. He was a good talker, though. He had a pretty good line. When you go to a meeting, he would put up a big front [chuckles]; you'd think he owned the whole city of Reno! [laughter] But all in all, he was not bad competition at all.

When did the name of the Reno Blacksmith Shop change to Reno Iron Works?

Well, it changed in 1931, as a matter of fact, when we were putting up the Mizpah Hotel. Some of our men decided to put up the name of the firm. Of course, we had a sign made up and put in the building that the Reno Blacksmith Shop was supplying the steel. Well, different contractors, as well as different people, said, "What the heck does Reno Blacksmith know about putting up steelin the building?" It became sort of a

debate and question, and I didn't waste any time to call it the Reno Iron Works instead of Reno Blacksmith after the time we were putting up the Mizpah Hotel. And it turned out to be the Reno Iron Works ever since, to this day.

Reno Iron put up a number of buildings here in Reno, including the Scott Motor Garage, I believe, on Virginia Street; Heitman Chevrolet; the Ross building.

Yes.

And when you were back with the Armstrong company, you were involved with repairing Lincoln Hall, I believe, on the campus, as well.

That's right. Yes.

Among the great variety of buildings that you have erected here in Reno and Washoe County, which one was the most challenging for you and why?

Well, the most challenging, you might say, was what they call the Harrah hotel now. We supplied all of the steel in that particular building. From the very beginning, we dealt with the one contractor, and before we got to the first floor this contractor quit for the reason that when they were digging the foundation, a great big surge of water developed in the foundation of the building that pretty near flooded the town of Reno. (The same thing took place a year or 2 before when the Bell Telephone Company put up a building on First and Center Street. Another surge of water came along, and it was extremely big.) This general contractor, he go to this company that had the building to put up, and he want some more money because he had to do considerable work to seal

the water that was coming up. It seemed as though the people didn't see fit...as long that he signed the contract, that he should ask for any more money. They told him that it was his own hard luck if they run into water. At that time it was 3 stories below the level of the ground and is still today, plus it was 6 stories above. We supply all of the steel at that particular time. However, we had our steel practically fabricated when this first contractor give up the job. He had a bonding company to bond by the contract, but we couldn't go to the bonding company to make us pay because the bonding company disqualified themselves as a company, as a bonding man. We were stuck with the steel on our hands.

A company from San Francisco—I couldn't recall their name right offhand—come to me, and they says, "We're willing to take the steel off your hands as long that you got it all fabricated for the job, but we want you to discount the cost of the steel 10 percent," which that was all they allow for the erection of the steel. And I could tell at the time that it was going to be a hard picking for me to have to take a 10 percent discount to dispose of the steel to the new contractor, which I had nothing to do with in the first place. But in order to get out from under, I took the chance of giving the steel for 10 percent discount, which we put up the building and we got paid for when the job was finished, but we didn't make a dime on the building. We didn't lose our shirt either, but we didn't make a dime on it. That Harrah's steel became the Towers in the Prune Yard on Highway 17 in San Jose. That was the most challenging job we had in my experience.

Well, that's certainly challenging in a financial sense. I wonder if any other buildings might have been more challenging in a technical

sense, that required more skill and knowledge in putting them up.

Well, we put different buildings up in Carson City for the state. But we never had a bit of trouble as far as getting our pay for them. We put up this Ormsby House hotel that we see today. We supply all of the steel for the Ormsby House. And as far as him pay us, we had no trouble whatsoever to get our money. It was quite a job, and it lasted a considerable time. There was a time that we probably had to wait 60 days instead of 30, but we got paid for it. We never lost a dime as far as the Ormsby House is concerned.

I understand that the Reno Iron Works put up the jail in Gardnerville in the mid-1930s.

Yes.

Can you tell me something about how you got that contract and what the jail was for?

Well, the main reason to put up the jail at that particular time...in those days, the Indians were not supposed to drink; they were not allowed to buy whiskey or to be intoxicated. However, during the Prohibition a lot of these home-brewed places were operated. The Indian was easily able to buy all the booze that they wanted to get, and there was a lot of drunken fellows. Particularly up around Minden-Gardnerville, they thought that they got to put a foot down and try to get these Indians to sober up and try to make them work...make something out of them like they used to do. Under those conditions, they came onto the idea to put up a jail.

Well, at that time there was a set of plans, and we got a set of plans—that's the time that I was still in contact with the Judson Pacific. I go down to San Francisco and arrive at a price,

and then I had to do the erection. At the time I remember that those bars in that jail were supposed to be extremely hard metal, so they don't take a hacksaw and cut it by hand. It was so hard that you couldn't cut it.

We put up the jail, and the first day that we start to assemble the steel, there was a time that we had to pound on the metal. The judge upstairs, where he was holding court, send word to stop the noise, that it interfere with his court procedure. We did stop for 15 or 20 minutes or maybe half an hour, and then I sent a man up to see the judge...how long we had to sit down, because we were holding up the works. We couldn't carry on with our job if he was carrying on with his. [chuckling] He sent word back that he didn't want any more noise for the balance of the day. Well, we called a day off; then we went home. Meantime I tried to arrange it so that we had an agreement to do like I did some years before: that he was operating one day and I was shut down, and I operated the next day and he would shut down. And so we finally got to the stage that we were able to finish the job, but instead of getting it out in about 2 weeks' time, it took something like the whole month. Whenever I was held up, my men, some of them quit the job and just walk out. I had to take a greenhorn and try to send him down there to help out to assemble the steel, which turned out to be a drawback.

After the completion of the steel work, they start to gather up these Indians and put them in jail. And after they had the jail so chock-full of men and women, they had to do something about the living condition! They had to go to the toilet, and one thing and another! [laughing] So they decide to let some of those people go. In the meantime, while somebody was in the toilet, the other fellow just run out of jail! The next day they fish around from Carson City down to....I

don't know how far down they had to go to gather up the Indians that they had in jail that they run away by open the doors. It turned out to be sort of a joke.

Can you recall about what year it was that you built the jail?

Well, I'd say it might have been 1935 or 1936. At the time, the country decided to open up the liquor so that the Indian could buy liquor.

The only jail that I'm familiar with down there that was used for that sort of thing was in Gardnerville, not in Minden. Of course, the 2 towns are adjacent....

I think you're right. I think it was in Gardnerville.

It's a rather small building. It's taller than it is wide. Two stories tall. Is that the one?

That's right.

Yes. It's back behind the old French Hotel?

I think so.

Well, that's in Gardnerville, then.

Yes.

Can you name any of the people who were influential in getting the jail built? Who was on the...what is it, the Board of Trustees that they have?

The Board of Trustees, they're the ones that were looking after the financial part. But the contractor was a fellow...named Herb Dressler. At that particular time, when you

refer to the bidding of the jail, I had to put up \$350 as a bond. I went to this man's house, which he wasn't home, and I had to do that in that very same day; otherwise, the next day they would open up the bids. If I didn't have my bond made up, my bid would be not considered. However, I went to the next door neighbor, and I told her that I want to give her \$350. And this lady look me in the face; she says, "We had all kind of people calling on us. Sometimes they want money, but we never had anybody in our life that I remember that want to give me \$350!" She said, "What is it for?" [laughter]

"Well," I says, "that's for the contractor that lives next door to you; there's nobody home." And I says, "When he come, I want you to do me a favor to see that he gets the money to carry my bidding on the jail." I had to explain the whole story. And this lady, she kind of smile. She thought it was pretty nice of me as a stranger to hand out \$350 to the next door neighbor.

After having done business down there, you probably were familiar with who the most influential families were in that area—the ones who were determined to have the jail built and have the Indians put away. Are there any names that come to mind?

The Dressier people were connected with the financial part. They were, you might say, the councilmen; so on, so forth. But I didn't have any direct dealing with them. The Dangbergs as well.

My interest really lies in the whole idea behind the thing, rather than in the actual construction of the building. Apparently, there was a curfew for the Indians, who had to be out of town at a certain time. Did you ever hear anything about that?

I do know that there was a curfew, but what time they had to be in, I don't know.

I've not been able to find any record of that. I know it happened, but I don't think it was ever written down; I think it was just understood. I'm told that there would be a siren that would blow at 6:00 in the evening, and then the Indians were to go home.

Yes.

It's been difficult for me to get any details on this. Did you ever employ any Indians?

No, not at that particular time. In the early days I didn't have anybody, [although we have now employed Indians for a number of years]. In the latest years, we got an Indian now who is one of the best men in the shop. He's a great big husky fellow; I think he must be 220 or 230 pounds, and as strong as a bull. And he works. And he know what he's doing. And he's a good welder—one of the best welders in the shop.

Sometimes they say that the Indian people, they're lazy. Or sometimes the people complain that they don't care whether they work or not. But this man actually has taken an interest on his work, and he's been steady. He's been with us, oh, I would say maybe 10 years. And he's still with us.

In 1932 the ironworkers, machinists, operating engineers and boilermakers unions organized our shop. But we didn't have any trouble as far as the unions's concerned. The union, I guess, they had their share of help, and I was running short at the time. But, nevertheless, we were able to navigate without any trouble—no setback whatsoever.

Your men all belonged to the union, though, did they?

Most of them, not all. There was some that they didn't care for it. But most of them—75 percent—they did belong to the union and paid the dues.

Can you recall how laborers at the Reno Iron Works were first organized?

We were putting up the Sierra Street bridge, and the mayor of the town came to me and asked me where the steel come from and who are the people that fabricate the steel. Well, at the time I was associated with Judson Pacific in San Francisco, and I won the bid. I had the Judson Pacific fabricate the metal, and they sent back the steel girders and so on for me to erect. The mayor of the town come to me, and he says, "Andy, under the condition that this is a city job, and the union, they like to have their share of the work, I would advise that those men that are going to erect the bridge, to be members of the union." And I told him that I got enough men to supply the demand, and I did give him the union men, which we start and finish the job without any trouble.

Well, how much higher were the wages that they received than those that you'd been in the habit of paying?

Our wages have been above union scale. The shop men...in the early days, we were paying \$3 an hour, and we would collect from the customer \$6. We had to pay for the coal that we burn, the material that...different things like the running of the drill press or different machinery that we had. Those was all included above the \$3 that we had to pay the mechanic. But union scale, the price went up from time to time until we got to the point that we were paying the men \$6 an hour. And now we're paying the men \$9 and \$10, depending

according to their capacity, their line of work. But from the beginning of the Second World War, the price of the steelworkers was going up too fast, I would say, in proportion with other works.

Has your shop ever been struck?

My shop, the way it was carried on, we never had any trouble with the union at any time. We never had any strikes or any disputes that we couldn't fix between ourself. Friendly... we tried not to get into an argument or put anybody's fist in somebody else's face! [laughs]

I understand that you started out at the beginning of the 1930s with 6 to 10 men in your work force and finally had had to reduce it to 4 to 5 men toward the end of the period. Is that correct?

Well, particularly in those years—say, from the beginning of the Thirties—the work in the wintertime would kind of slow down considerable. When it was getting too cold for these laborers to be working outside on the building, they just cut it off sometimes, even though the building might be under construction. When it start to snow, they just shut it down. Maybe if they shut it down in November, they won't open up until the first of March. And under those conditions it make it sort of.... Even if the shop did light work, it made kind of hard for us to take care a bunch of men if we didn't have enough work to keep them busy.

This is interesting. The type of business being done by the Reno Blacksmith Shop began to change in the 1930s with the introduction of the automobile. You were getting less business from farmers, and you were getting less business from logging interests and sawmills and so forth

who had once come in to have tires put on the wheels and all sorts of other things like that. So I assumed that you had more or less lost that type of business and were changing the way things were done. You're telling me now that it was still seasonal—that in the winter, in the 1930s, work dropped off to the point where you could not sustain a full working force. Was that any different from what it had been like in the nineteen teens and 1920s?

Well, things changed from time to time, you know. Sometimes these changes took place that you really don't see them until you looked back 2 or 3 years afterward. But there was quite a large change for the reason that the farmers didn't have the amount of horses that they used to have in the early days. Practically every farmer, they have an automobile truck. We were repairing the trucks, and we were building new bodies, and we had actually translated our work from wagon works to automobiles and trucks.

We manufactured many truck bodies, many different lines of devices. Now, like in Tonopah, they were booming in the early days; they were booming extremely fast and developed a lot of work and so on. [Tonopah experienced a gold mining boom in the early twentieth century that crested in 1913.—ed.] Now, there was a man that was selling REO trucks in Reno, a fellow by the name of Durham, and for him we built many different truck bodies to carry ore. [John C. Durham was the manager of the REO Motor Car Company at 143 Keystone Avenue in 1912.—ed.] We had a fine mechanic working in the shop. At one time we would make a body, and this one mechanic would build a hand hoist, with gears and so on, so forth. When the truck was loaded with ore and taken to the place where they want to unload it, one man could just...with the crank the

hoist raises the front end of the body, with hinges on the back end, and he unloaded the ore very, very easily. Before, they had to have 2 or 3 men with a shovel and just keep on shoveling it off. In this particular case, one man was doing the unloading of the truck very fast and very satisfactory for the working man as well as the man that owned the interest in the mine.

You told me that before the First World War you used to get a lot of business from farmers, who would come in and have you fix plowshares and other agricultural implements. Did that business continue in the 1930s?

Yes, but slowly, little by little, it kind of drifted away. We used to see men coming in from Doyle or from different places in the north part of California, and little by little they disappeared; they failed to come. However, there was a fellow by the name of Ramelli, and he came till about 1962 or '64. He used to come along with a great big bunch of plowshares and rakes, machinery of different types, and we would be busy for a week to repair whatever this man brought to us. In many cases, he would bring us a great big cheese, and if the price was very reasonable, we would exchange the cost of the cheese from our bill. We had a thing kind of going very satisfactory for both of us. However, when they changed the system on the plows, he did away with the plowshare. He had a different gadget to put in place of the plowshare, and I lost a customer from that time after. [chuckles]

You had also had a lot of customers who were Italian farmers from Sierra Valley and from other areas around here where there were Italian communities. Did that continue in the 1930s?

Well, it was from the early days. But they did stay with us until the beginning of the Second World War. We had those farmers with us for many, many years.

You've mentioned that sometimes cheese would be exchanged for work.

That's right.

In the 1930s, during the Depression, in other communities it was not at all uncommon for barter to take the place of cash money. Was bartering going on here? Were you accepting food or other finished products in return for your work during the 1930s?

Well, it came slowly and gradually, but during the Depression there was many times that we did buy whatever they had to sell—even vegetables, potatoes and stuff of that kind. If the price was \$5 and my job was \$6, they gave me \$1 and the potatoes, and that settled the bill. We did quite a bit of that until pretty close to the Second World War.

At some point there was an Italian-American club formed in Reno that was called the Dante Club, I believe. Do you have any recollection of that?

I was the financial secretary! [laughing]

Oh, you were? [laughter] What led to the formation of the club?

The main endeavor was started out by a man by the name Johnny Granata. He was a Roman by birth, was born somewhere in the vicinity of Rome. And he was trying to promote an Italian newspaper, which he did. This newspaper was circulating in Reno, I think—a weekly paper. We used to get the

paper in the shop, and we would throw it in the fire sometimes; we didn't have time to look at what was in it! [laughs] Many times I didn't look at what the headline was!

We had at one time in the Dante Club 75 members. They were older people than I was at the time. These men were well-to-do people. We had general contractors; we had saloon men, and we had different lines, mostly business people. We thought that it was one club that it was worthwhile to be a member. The dues was \$1 per month. But in most cases, when you meet, you eat. We would go to any of these nightclubs where they were serving meals, you know, and we asked the ladies and wife or whoever they happen to be, too. A certain day we'd have a meeting at the nightclubs, and we'd have a night out, which was practically every month.

We had business people that they were really up and coming. And during one of the wars in Italy, I think it was, when Mussolini was in regime, we had a general contractor that was from the southern part of Italy, and he wanted to donate money to Mussolini to carry on the war. And that was a really.... The debate that took place in our club lasted until the club dissolved. Most of the people, when he first got up and tried to make a motion to donate...at that time he wanted to donate something like \$1,000. We didn't have it, but we could have scraped up probably \$500. However, the majority of the fellows, they were not in favor of helping Mussolini. There was different parts that were getting letters from home that the young sons, they were mistreated by Mussolini's law. And there was a lot of people, particularly from the north of Italy, that had no respect for Mussolini; they didn't care for him.

This man coming into the club and trying to...well, he didn't try to run the club, but he was trying to take a hold the best he could

under his power that he had, and we finally compromised to give him \$300 instead of \$500. One night he had his friends, and he had it all organized to vote in favor, so out goes \$300 out of the \$500. We made out this check, and to tell you the honest truth we never got an answer. Whether the check got to Mussolini's regime or whatever become of it, how far it got, we never got the check, and we never got any answer.

At that particular time, it brought dissension in the club. There was a time that somebody would suggest about doing this and doing something else; there was always so many others in the opposite direction—particularly those that they were in favor of this man to send money to Mussolini. Those were one gang that put it on one way, and other gang put it the other way, including me [laughs]; we would try to offset, but the decision got to the point that the members... like, Johnny Granata that started it, he passed away. In the course of 4 or 5 years we lost like 25 members of the club.

We got to the stage that I could see that they were going to bring in a lot of these young men with their different ideas, that I would call them radical. Under those conditions, I didn't think I wanted to have anything to do with it. I was one of those that instead of trying to advance and trying to take new membership in the club, I was trying to say, "To hell with them. If we can't get good people, we don't want them at all!" That was my thought for many years until the majority of those people that were in my favor, they passed away; they were no longer living, and as far as I'm concerned I didn't care whether there was anybody else coming or not. There was some applications that there would come a time that I knew from their father that they would be bad timber for the place—I turned them down cold. I didn't even go to the president.

Was membership open only to Italians?

No, anybody that wanted to join, but they would talk Italian, so nobody else'd care about it [laughing] on account of the language. This fellow that was in charge of the newspaper, Johnny Granata, he was a strong man to carry on the Italian language, as well as different lines of endeavor. We gave money to the university one time; I think it was like \$200 or \$300 on a project that was going up there.

The club was well organized until we got, as I said, to the point where the Mussolini idea came along, and from that time on we started to go downhill. We went down to the stage that there wasn't anybody paying any more dues, so we quit.

The Mussolini thing must have happened in the 1930s. Is that right?

Well, the beginning, yes. He carried on, I think, for a period of 8 or 10 years.

Oh, yes. But you couldn't possibly have sent money to Mussolini during the Second World War. Perhaps his Ethiopian....

No, I think it was before.

So it must have been during the 1930s.

Yes, I think so.

When did the club finally disband?

Well, like I said, when nobody paid any dues, I didn't send any bill out to anyone; "Send me a check for \$12," or whatever it was. At that time it was a dollar a month, which is \$12 for the year. And even the ones that were good, faithful members that were willing to pay, I told them not to send it.

We had some money in a savings account, and I kept it in there for, I think, probably 10 years if not longer. I was trying to build up a financial base. There was also a Dante Club in San Francisco, and we thought that some of these days we'd probably give to the Dante Club of San Francisco. But we got to the stage that Internal Revenue wanted to know what I was going to do with the Dante Club money. Perhaps they thought I would find ways to keep the money for myself. I did not have that thought in mind at any time. However, after I got to talk last year at this time with my daughter, we decided to transfer that money to the School of Medicine at the University of Nevada. I gave them a check for fifteen thousand two hundred and some odd dollars in one lump sum. That Dante Club's money was given to those people up there, and my daughter wrote a letter instructing them to invest that money and keep it for the purpose of any of (the grandchildren of Dante Club members who were students]...to help them develop their line of endeavor from the money derived from the Dante Club.

Do you still have the records and papers of the Dante Club?

Yes. They are still filed and packed.

RENO IRON WORKS AND COMMUNITY EXPANSION, 1941-1986

What was the economic effect of World War II on the Reno Iron Works? I know that the community had barely gotten out of the Depression. In parts of the country the Second World War meant prosperity for businesses such as yours; in other communities, depending upon where they were located, it did not. There are a lot of different factors that enter into this. Did you have any difficulties finding people to work in your shop during the Second World War?

No, no. There was always plenty of help...I couldn't hire half of the people that was applying for a job.

As someone who operates a forge and an iron works, you might have been affected by laws against using certain strategic materials. A number of things were rationed during the Second World War. I'm curious as to whether that had any effect on what you did. I know that it was almost impossible to get a set of rubber tires for a car or truck unless the thing were doing some war-related business. It was

difficult to get fuel. And it may be that it was difficult to get fuel to run the forge, too. Did the war have any effect on your business other than the training exercise that you went through?

No. The cost of the metal, like of the fuel and so on, so forth, naturally was going up overnight; the price was raising. But as far as being short, I don't think there was anything that you tried to buy that was not on the market, that I can think of at the present time.

In a lot of other communities construction came almost to a halt during World War II. What happened here in Reno?

Well, as far as the construction during the war, it was practically cut out completely. It did happen in Reno as well as other places that there was a lot of fellows that they lost part of their family. Either the father or the son, they were called into service, and the condition of the country as a whole was, I would say, 50 percent different than it was a year before.

With construction in decline what sort of jobs were you getting here at the iron works?

Well, that's difficult to say. Sometime, if we didn't have a job that was actually ordered, we had enough stock material on hand...like, we would build a truck body and maybe keep it in there and hope to sell in the next 6 months or so. In order to keep my men busy, we would try to build up ornamental railing. You take a piece of railing... say, the length of a bar is 20 foot long, and you take a top and bottom bar; then you put every 6 inches straight bars up and down, and you build maybe 10 sections. You hope that whenever things open up (that they're putting up a new building) that the railing be already made; you only have to cut it to length and set it in place to answer the purpose for the job or whatever the case may be.

We would try to keep the mechanic busy, especially when I had good mechanics that I dare not to lose them. We would try to manage it so that even though sometime I didn't have an order, I would keep them busy building up either truck body or ornamental railing or whatever we may have to do. And such a thing as andirons, we would make maybe 10 sets, in hope that you could be able to sell it in the next 2 or 3 years.

Did you ever get any government contracts to manufacture anything for the military?

We worked on military bases at Herlong, Stead, Fallon, Hawthorne and Tonopah. Reno Iron was involved in the construction of such things as bunkers, buildings and airstrips. We had a homemade crane, which we made in my shop. I was the operator, and I was working with different contractors up there at Stead doing different types of work. I was contracted with the man that was doing a lot of cement

work up there, and it seemed as though he had to lay floor and put up sort of an advertising board, like, for the military to shoot at [...a large target].

At that time, there was orders from all directions that we're to buy United States metal—nothing else but. Well, I agreed to that, and one of the men (I think he was a captain or maybe a major) came to my shop, and he bought something like 100 sheets of metal—quarter inch thick, 5 foot wide and 10 foot long. I agreed to supply it for a certain amount of money, and I got the order, and I started to deliver in a week or 10 days after. The first batch of metal that was delivered up there, right in the corner of this one sheet there was sort of a stamp pounded in there—"Made in France." [laughs] But when I delivered the steel, I told the man that has to be United States metal; I presumed that's what I was going to get, and I supplied the steel.

After the steel was in the cement about a week or 10 days, I got a call from the same officer that gave me the job; he ask me if I'm willing to swear that I gave United States steel to them. "Well," I said, "I think I would." And I says, "I insisted that I should have U.S. metal." He says that he want me to go up there and see, and I ask him what was the case. He told me that every sheet is written with "Made in France." And, sure enough...[laughs] I didn't know what to do with it, and he didn't know either, hardly.

I got in touch with the man that sold me the steel, which was the Pittsburgh-Des Moines Steel. They went up there, and after considerable debate I came to the understanding with the officer that I bought the metal in good faith; that if there was any difference, that they better fight it over with the man that sold me the steel.

I continue to deliver the steel, but from that time on I made up my mind that I'm

sure to see whether or not there's any stamp that was made. And, sure enough, there was more stamps on the steel that it was made in France, but there was no comeback, no more argument for it.

When they first were setting up an oil tank to service airplanes at Stead, we were the first ones with the crane that we had made in our own shop. We were able to take a tank that weighed 15 or 16 tons, and set it into a place where the concrete men had a saddle made so that we can set the tank. I was able to take a 10- or 15-ton tank and set it in there with a one-ton capacity crane. Instead of picking up the tank, which my crane was not able to do, we had to roll the tank in place by skidding it down on planks.

We had men working up there at Stead for 6 months when they first open up the camp. We were doing work for different contractors up there. Since we had a crane, different ones come along and they want to hire the crane for picking up either bars or reinforcing steel, even lumber. They were picking up one ton of lumber and setting it on the scaffold where they're going to put up the building. So this crane was kept busy for pretty much during the erection of that Stead place.

At about the same time, the military was building up a place in Fallon, Nevada, which we had sold steel on. In some cases we had to erect the steel after we sold it. I had men work in Fallon; I had men work in Hawthorne; and I had men working at an army base in northern California—I forgot the name of the place now—but we had men working up there; they would call it "building eagle." It was a hole in the ground where it look like they were storing ammunition. [Probably a concrete and earthen munitions bunker.—ed.] They were putting in a concrete front wall, and we had to make a steel door with a lock...to see that each eagle would be perfectly closed so

that no one can get in to do any damage. If anyone would set one of those eagles on fire, that would blow up the camp.

So they had ammunition and things in there?

Yes. I couldn't think of the name of the post right now. It was pretty close to Susanville on the way to Reno. [Probably the Herlong establishment.—ed.]

Did you have any difficulty keeping skilled laborers around during the Second World War?

Not exactly, but in the years before, sometimes we had more callers that I had a position to put them to work. But during that time it looks like even people in California in different lines of endeavor were calling for labor to go to work in the shipyard, particularly the Kaiser shipyard. They were building concrete boats, and I had men from my shop quit the job to go down to Oakland and get jobs at Kaiser for more money than what I was paying. And I said, "Well, go ahead." There was no use for me to try to keep them. But they were paying considerable high wages down there at the time, and those that were willing to work and had no family ties, why, they naturally took off and go to California.

During the Second World War I also had a class of men come to the shop to learn to be welders. And in 48 hours we had to decide whether or not these mechanics turn out to be welders, or whether they're going to be no good at all, or fair. We came to an understanding with some of the officials from Carson City that I was to educate 1,000 men in the course of 6 months. We had transformed half of our shop into rooms like telephone booths, and half of our mechanics were becoming sort of schoolteachers to

educate these greenhorns that try to learn to be a welder. Some of them were very good. I would say 50 percent turned out to be very, very good. Twenty-five percent were fair, and 25 percent was not good at all. However, we kept that up for a period of 6 months, maybe a little longer. And these men, whenever we see that they turn out to be a fairly good welder, we would directly send them to Oakland to a fellow that was building barges out of concrete and steel—Henry J. Kaiser. That was the place that we recommended these men to be welders; they were sent to Kaiser to carry on from there to be a welder for him and for the government, I guess.

For years later I received Christmas cards from men that worked in our shop and tried to learn the trade, from all over the United States, and sometimes even some from Spain and from South America. I was surprised when Christmastime came that all of these postal cards come from different directions, and I had not the least idea that they would be spread out to that extent.

This was a government contract to train these people?

That's right.

And that was in 1942, I take it?

Yes. Well, that was in the beginning, when this war broke out.

Can you recall how you came to get the contract? Did the government come to you, or did you apply for it?

The government came to me. There was 2 officials from Carson City, and I didn't know just exactly for a while whether it was worthwhile for me to get into a deal of that

sort. I didn't know whether I was able to carry on what they expected me to do. But for the sake of everything concerned, I thought if I can do some good to help, I was only too glad to do my share. And from what I was told, I think I did a pretty good job.

Can you recall approximately how many men you trained?

I figure we trained more or less right in the neighborhood of a thousand men.

In how many years? How long were you engaged in this?

Well, we were engaged about a year and a half.

Can you recall how much you were being paid per man?

I don't remember right offhand how much, but I was getting very little. Not hardly a dollar an hour per man. Something like 95¢ or 96¢ per man.

Were you able to continue doing the work that the shop had been doing prior to that—the construction work—and train them simultaneously?

Yes, we carried on. Even though after the contract expired, there was a lot of them that like to be welders, and we carried on, tried to educate some of those men. That went along even up until a few years ago, for many, many years. People want to learn to be welder. And we had those telephone booths...some were taken down; some were up for quite a number of years after, and we would take them in and try to teach them to be a welder.

What do you mean by telephone booths? What are you talking about?

We made booths 4 foot square with a table. And the men learn to be welders. We had metal or something on top of the table to put 2 pieces together; that's when you start to be a welder. That was the beginning for all these 1,000 men that I was supposed to educate to try to make 2 pieces of metal stick together. And then you try to break it, and some of these stick fairly well; some, the first lick that you give, whatever he was welding goes out in 2 pieces. And that was kept on for quite a number of months. However, the whole thing didn't last more than 2 years, I would say, as far as doing work for the government to teach these young men.

Yes, there was a big push to get liberty ships built by the Kaiser company over in the Bay area. Were the men you were training from Nevada, or did they bring them in from elsewhere?

Sometimes they were strangers, but not so much. They were coming in from Utah; they were coming in from around the state, from California. I had quite a few that were coming in from the north part of California, anywhere from Sacramento up. But most of them, I would say better than 75 percent, were Nevada boys.

I kind of had the idea that the government know that we're going to get into a war; that it would take some time before things be ironed out or the war be over, and they would try to educate these young men to be welders. Under those conditions we did the best we could to play ball with them.

Were there any noticeable changes in the way life was lived in Reno during the Second World War.

While the second war was going on, there was a lot of traffic, and there was a lot of automobiles on the roads, going and coming, either from California, east or west and so on. We were kept busy through a different line of endeavor, and so was the whole town. The whole city of Reno was busy, particularly the stores. They all had plenty to do and plenty of people to work for. The hotels were plenty busy. We had a lot of different soldiers, different officials coming in through the town, particularly going to California. The town was busy in a different line or way than during peacetime. There was considerable difference, yes.

During the war, highway and rail traffic through Nevada grew. With our crane we salvaged derailed railroad equipment and wrecked trucks. We did repair a lot of trucks. Sometimes they would have a collision; sometimes they just get to the point that they had to break down, and we had the space anywhere from Elko to California to pick up these rigs and take care of them and fix them up so get back on their wheels to travel.

I hope you'll be able to tell me a few things about the social impact on Reno of the presence of Stead Air Force Base. There were quite a number of GIs stationed at Stead. It didn't double the population of Reno, but it certainly increased it drastically.

It did increase considerable. Well, the first thing that came along...at the beginning of Prohibition those that was operating a bar or saloon, they were not a bit happy to be told that they got to do away with the liquor. And during the war the government did away with the red light district in Reno, in which those men, they would spend the evening [laughs] to visit the girls...and that had to be cut out, too, you know! I think it was more

state government; I don't think the federal had much to say about that. But the women, they were very much opposed. The local women at the time— since they had the vote...they vote that proposition down cold right from the beginning. [chuckles] That was when the camp first started out. I would say it might have been 1941 or 1942 or something of that sort.

So what were the young men doing for entertainment when they came to town, then?

Well, the YMCA was one of the main places that they were going to. Any of the members that belong to a different organization...they were attending the lodge more so than they did before. The YMCA and the Salvation Army, too, would provide entertainment. They were going up in the camp— instead of the young men to come downtown to Reno, they would try to keep them in the camp by providing entertainment up there. And they had good entertainment. They had singers and people that actually came out of Hollywood, I guess. The boys were well taken care of, and they were well provided, as far as anything in the line of food. But it was like soda pop and drinks that has no alcohol in it. To compare my first experiences in World War I and when I saw that World War II, these people today, they got better entertainment than we did when we were in the service.

There were a lot of clubs like the Riverside Hotel and different places that had shows every night. Some of the places, they were willing to give up either one or 2 nights of the week to give it to the boys at the Salvation Army or different ones that they had charge to provide the entertainment up there. There were different houses in the town of Reno; they were willing to sacrifice one or 2 nights

of the week to provide entertainment for the people at the Stead. We thought that the business people were very congenial, very willing to cooperate.

In some cases I think a lot of families thought that they would like to help the war effort. They were sending their daughters to USO [United Service Organizations] occasions at Stead. We had in mind at the time that we try to gather up the women to take more action with the Red Cross or with the war effort. Some of the youths were anxious to go to the Civil Air Patrol (CAP), including my own daughter. She was flying at the Sky Ranch on Pyramid Road. At that particular time, every time the telephone would ring in my shop, I was going to the telephone with the thought in mind that 9 times out of 10 it might have been my daughter that got killed. And that was not a very good feeling, I'll tell you. I felt pretty much out of place. She was too young to start with. On the other hand, they didn't realize the danger. They didn't realize what it meant to take a plane up in the air, to take a solo flight and be able to pilot that thing out and be able to come back in the field. That was quite a chore. [CAP was a very popular and successful high school flying program for Reno youth.]

The period right after the Second World War was a period of high demand for a lot of industries. What happened with Reno and the Reno Iron Works after the war ended? Did you find that your business increased?

No, we were able to carry on, I would say, practically normal. There was no ups and downs to speak of any kind. We had to bid on jobs, and if some firm in San Francisco or the West Coast were hungry for the steel, naturally they would get the business, and I was the loser. But it didn't happen too

very often. We were able to hold our own between the local customers that I had, and the industry. They were getting off of the military line of endeavor, but they were getting back into the civilian, and I was able to keep on working. I never had any trouble as far as laying anybody off on account of a lack of work, or have to hire any more helpers in order to supply the men. I kept on going, week by week and month by month, without any trouble.

Throughout the United States a great number of war surplus trucks went onto the market after the Second World War, and the trucking industry in general enjoyed a big boost. One of the consequences of interstate, transcontinental trucking was that right here in Reno a group of people decided that they would try to make Reno a more prosperous community by building warehouses and by having a warehousing law passed that would permit the storage of material here free of charge—by that, I mean without any tax on inventory. Mr. Frank Bender was involved in that, as were several other prominent Renoites. Do you have any recollection of that or any of the figures who were involved in it? Was Reno Iron Works involved in building the warehouses? Tell me as much as you can remember about that.

Well, yes. The first warehouse that was built here in Reno was a sheet steel building. And then before then, we had to figure out the structural steel to so much a ton. But when you talk about sheet steel, my goodness, you can go up the whole building in not very much more than 4 or 5 tons. And this Bender that you mentioned just now, I was the first one to put up 2 buildings for him. He was also a banker, and he was a very prominent businessman, and he was well liked by everybody. He only had one son; that's the

one that is in there now. The son at the time was in college or something; I don't know where, but he was in college. However, this fellow Bender became very fond of me, and I became very fond of him. After I put up the first 2 building—I would say maybe 10 years later—I put up 2 more buildings for him. Today I think he has half a dozen buildings in different places in town. One building is on Evans Avenue between Fourth and Fifth. And I think he had others; I'm not sure where the places are. However, these were warehouses for government stuff that the Bender people had.

Talking about trucks, from time to time they have sales. They were trying, in the Second World War, after, to see that the ex-servicemen would receive a break to buy these used cars as war surplus at a decent price. However, these automobile dealers in Reno, they got wise to what was going on at the warehouse; they immediately try to jump over the common soldier's steps and tried to buy the truck himself, so that the automobile dealer would sell the truck to the ex-serviceman instead of the warehouse direct. That took place in Reno. I know of many different ones, including some of the men that I had work for me, that they would try to buy a truck. They thought the price was unreasonable, but they discovered that the end of the story, when you get to pay for it, they had to deal with an automobile dealer, because the dealer had to buy a license, and he had to maintain a business. And under those conditions, the man had to deal with an automobile representative.

The same thing took place even after the war was over. They had a machine shop up there at Stead—there was a sheet metal shop, and there was a machine shop, and there was a carpenter shop. And they had a different type of machinery that after they closed they

would try to sell it to the higher bidder. At that particular time I had in mind of a lathe, and I had in mind of a drill press, and I had in mind of an electric hammer. I had them all picked out what I was going to bid on; however, some big firm out of Los Angeles came up, and the day of the auction they bought everything that was under the roof. And our fellows from Reno that went up there and tried to sharpen our pencil, to bid on this, bid on that—we didn't have the Chinaman's chance of it on anything. The guy from Los Angeles bought everything, building and all. I guess they got it for a reasonable price, but we never did know what the cost was.

After the Second World War a debate began that's continuing today; it's been going on for the last 35 or 40 years. It had to do with how the city of Reno was to develop and how the entire state was to develop. You were a member of the Rotary, and you were also a member of the Chamber of Commerce. Do you recall anything about proposed methods whereby Reno would plan its own growth, if indeed they did plan it? After the Second World War there was a continuing discussion going on about whether or not Reno should continue to develop in the direction of a gambling and divorce and marriage based economy or whether it should try to diversify. Mr. Bender, of course, believed that the best route to take was this so-called freeport idea with warehousing. There were people who were in opposition to that. Can you recall any of the debates that were going on within the Rotary or within the city government or anything at the time, and tell me something about it?

Well, I never was active or took sides politically. I felt as though that if you run a business, you got to be on terms with different ones that are in politics. At one time

we had a fellow by name Harry Heidtman that was a big shot in Reno. We talk about George Wingfield, that if he run for governor, he'd've got elected; why, so would Harry Heidtman. As businessmen, we tried to get along with different ones. Harry Heidtman was my landlord for some time—I would say from 1930 to 1950, probably. And he had pamphlets, advertising sheets, and he come into my shop, and he wanted to put it in the front window. As much as I had to get along with the fellow, I said, "Nothing doing." I says, "If you're in politics, you have to do it the best you can, but don't use my shop to influence somebody to vote for you. He might be one of my best customers, and I don't want you to try to change his mind or drift him away. I would shut the gate on him, too, as much as that I had to try to get along with him." He listened to me. He took all of these signs that he was going to put in the window; he took them right with him, and he went 2 or 3 buildings farther down toward the El Cortez Hotel, and he put them in another building. So, it was not too far away from my shop that he did put up the advertising sign.

That fellow was a politician. For many years he had the Buick agency for the whole state of Nevada. He had a subdealer in Elko, and he had one in Winnemucca, and he had one in Fallon—in every large city—and he even had one in Truckee. And that man was well liked by the people as well as the factory where they were selling automobiles. He was well liked by everybody. He was also the owner of this Becker's Bar in the latest years, when Jack Dempsey was going in.

Because of the GI Bill there were a great number of men who began attending universities right after the Second World War. The student population at the University of Nevada grew enormously, as it did in practically every other

land grant university throughout the United States. I suspect that might have had some impact on the growth of Reno and what was going on here. Can you remember anything about that?

Well, I don't think I have an answer to that question. I really don't recollect that there was anything took place on account of having more or less students at the university. One thing that they might have learned in the Second World War is that it pays to have an education. It pays very, very deeply. There was a lot of people that after they got out of the army, they tried to start school again. They had learned from past experience that it was worthwhile to have something in the upstairs storage room. [chuckles]

Yes. I understand that you helped a lot of students over the years. Can you tell me about when you began doing that and what sort of help you were able to provide?

Well, a lot of these men that were attending university didn't have the financial means to carry on. After the first World War I was able, I was willing, and I was anxious to give those boys a chance, if there's an opportunity for them to at least earn enough money so they can pay their way through. I was only too glad and willing to do it. Sometimes I had 3 or 4 young men working in there all year round. Even the vacation time they were earning money so that the following year they can re-enter again at the university. I kept that up, up until the present time. Even today we have 5 boys attending the University of Nevada on Reno Iron Works scholarships. I have a granddaughter attending the University of Nevada; she works in here. I think I've seen her out there this morning. I always sponsored somebody up

there, that they didn't have money enough in their own pockets and they were working in the shop. I was glad to do it, and some of them appreciate it. [Mr. Ginocchio is said to have supported more than 30 Reno businessmen in securing B.A.'s. Currently Reno Iron Works offers scholarships paying 50 percent of all expenses for employees' family members who attend UNR.—ed.]

How do you go about recruiting these students? How do they get in touch with you?

They come to me; I didn't have to recruit them. They just come to me, There was someone from the university, including the president, that he was a good friend of mine—the president by name Clark. [Walter E. Clark was president of the University of Nevada from 1918 to 1938.—ed.] This fellow was sort of a very jolly fellow, and he was also a member of the Rotary. We might've had lunch at the table and discussed the different condition. He would ask me questions; I would ask him questions. And he was one of the men that suggested to try to help those young men that were willing to learn, if they had the financial backing, to go to school. Through his recommendation I did my very best at the time to help him, and I've been doing it ever since.

Have you been friends with any of the other presidents of the University of Nevada?

There was one president by the name of Love. [Dr. Malcolm A. Love was president of the University of Nevada from 1950 to 1952.—ed.] He was a very nice man, a very pleasant man. He was also a member of the Rotary Club. For some reason or other, the poor fellow, as much that he was trying to please everybody, there must have been

some...somewhere along the line there were politics that he wasn't probably fairly sure of, and I don't think he served more than one year that he got himself out. I felt sorry for him, because I think he was really too good for the job, actually. [chuckling] He was a kind man, and he was willing to listen to anybody. But like I say, I think it was a political affair that he didn't last more than one year.

His successor as president of the university was a man by the name of Minard Stout. Do you have any recollection of him?

No, but I know that he was a better politician than Love. He was a better mixer.

He got fired....

Well, they all do! [laughter] Even today, when I meet the president of the university, I say, "I wonder how long you're going to last." [laughs]

I think it's more political than it is anything else, because the men, from what I see, actually try to please, and they try to play ball with the boys, and they give and then take in many different ways, and the girls, too. But unless they're able to manage to get along with one, perhaps that he might have more to say than another, that's a point that still exists today—from Clark's time up to the present day.

I know you helped a lot of students go to the university. Did you help many people from Italy to come to this country?

One that I sponsored was my nephew. He's down in Palo Alto now. He has a responsible place. He's connected with something that they do with electronics. I don't know much about their line of endeavor. However, since

I was his uncle and I financed his way over here, as soon as he got on his feet he paid me back, dollar for dollar. And I also financed 2 fellows that were born and raised in the same town where I was raised, from a good family. They didn't have the financial means, and I sent on money to come all the way to here without any trouble. You know, today we talk about the Statue of Liberty. In the early days, a lot of people tried to raise enough money to get as far as New York. But when they get up in New York City, through the immigration people, they had a lot of foreigners that they didn't know what to do with; they didn't have anyone to go any farther, and it was really a puzzle. The foreigner didn't have the language to talk for himself to get a job, because they talk a different language and so on. And in my case, when I sent for these relatives or friends of mine, I not only give enough money for the ticket, but I also give them [a good deal more money] to spare.

That applied to me as well. When I landed in New York City, there was many people that had to go through Ellis Island because they had no way to go any farther. But in my own case I remember that I had this money [chuckles] tucked away in my pocket; I had \$20 gold pieces; I had \$10 gold pieces; and I had \$5 gold pieces. [chuckles] And when I show to those immigration officers that money that I had, they thought if I had these, that I had a trip paid to Reno, Nevada. [laughter] I had that much gold in my pocket, plus some silver, that they didn't send me to that island with the rest of the guys. [laughs] They opened the gate and let us go freely without any trouble—none whatsoever.

I don't remember sponsoring any more people. Those were recommended from my friends and members of the family...people in the same town where I was born. There might be more, but regardless of who they

were or how many there were, they pay me back dollar for dollar. I never lost a dime as far as financing their way out here from anybody. [Mr. Ginocchio has also sponsored several skilled wrought iron forgers from other countries.—ed.]

How many of them stayed here in Reno?

Oh, I think they all stayed in Reno. Of course, this nephew of mine was down in San Francisco, and then he went up to where he is now with this business in Palo Alto. But the family stayed here in Reno, and then in the latest years went in business.

At one time—it was 1955, I think, when Reno almost got flooded out.... Tony Pecetti and I had been neighbors; there was an alley between his building and my shop. And he saw me come along, that it was stormy; and then he came down in the shop and said, “Where are you going?”

I told him that I’m going to try to save a bridge down on Lake Street, that the water may haul it away. I asked him to come along with me as a helper, and he did. We went down, and, sure enough, the water was bringing in trees and different plants and boards and shrubbery, so that it formed sort of a dam right in front of the bridge. There was a time that I could tell from the sound of it that this bridge was rocking on its foundation. We were dragging these trees off from the front and dumping them off on the back of the bridge to keep from having a dam. We carried that out from 1:00 in the afternoon till about 3:30 or maybe 4:00 in the afternoon. And then the water kind of receded, and we left and went home.

After we got to the shop, we were talking about what we’re going to do with our labor that we did to try to save the bridge. He said, as far he’s concerned, he’s not going to ask for

anything. And I thought that if that’s the way he feel about himself, I would do likewise. This man that come to me to try to save the bridge was a fellow by the name of [John] Chism; he was a city councilman. He said to me in the beginning that he had no authority or he wouldn’t have any money to pay me for the job, but if I wanted to do him a favor, to go down and try to save the bridge. And under those conditions, Tony and myself both decided not to turn in a bill and skip it. So we saved the bridge.

There was one very large strike by the United Steelworkers that affected the steel industry throughout the United States in 1959. It made it very difficult for the automobile industry to even manufacture cars. Can you remember what happened with Reno Iron Works during the strike in 1959?

Everyone would read in the newspaper different things that was taking place, but as far as me having any trouble with the Iron Works, the men that I had work were pretty satisfied with what I was paying, and I never had a bit of trouble.

Well, I’m not actually thinking of any kind of labor trouble; I’m wondering whether or not you were able to stockpile enough steel so that you could continue to work during that very lengthy.... I can’t recall the number of days, but I believe it was well over 100 days that the steel industry didn’t manufacture steel.

Yes. Well, it’s a funny thing. It looks to me that the business people at that particular time saw what was coming. When the things went on strike, 2 or 3 days later the steel was coming in from Germany; it was coming in from France, coming in from Belgium, and warehouse steel—any of the foreign

countries, including the Japanese. There was steel shipped and loaded in every port, from New York to Mexico. And it was surprising to me at the time; I said to myself, "Well, funny that we have a strike that is almost all over the United States." It wasn't a case of one or 2 places, but the whole United States was on strike. However, there was no trouble getting any steel, because, as I said, it was coming in the ships from any part of the world that they had steel to sell over here.

After the Second World War, Reno Iron Works grew. It was not like a mushroom that grow overnight. [chuckles] It took years and years of speculation and watching my step in business, and this is a point where education comes in. If I'd have had 5 or 6 years of university education, today I would be a millionaire. But I was at the stage that, when a job would come to me—like a set of blueprints or so on, so forth—that I felt was too big for my capacity to figure things out and make up a bid, I didn't have anybody with me until I got married that would help me to develop anything. They were good workmen; they meant well enough; they would do almost anything you tell them to do, but as far as to initiate something, to develop something for the best of the business, I never had that until I got married, and that was a bookkeeper in the office who knew how to write up a contract and finance and so on, so forth of that kind.

* * * * *

As far as the growth of Reno and my growth, it was just step by step. I tried to save a dollar in every way that I could see that a dollar was to be saved, to be made. And I would give a lot of credit to Judson Pacific in San Francisco. They gave me a good shake, I would say, in the line of business to try to

secure different jobs that were going on in Reno, that I would never have had otherwise.

From 1930 to 1956, when my partner John Ginocchio died, we experienced a good relationship and steady growth. John's one-half interest was inherited by his son-in-law for one dollar! His son-in-law, Earl Avansino, had been working for us, learning the business, for a few years before John's death. Earl and I decided to move the business to 290 Keystone Avenue in 1960. We had a fairly good relationship; however, when Earl decided to bring his young son, John, into the business, the age differences were too great. That factor caused me to feel I was outnumbered, and circumstances caused me to feel that I wanted some of my own family involved, too.

At that time, we employed Don Jewett, the husband of Peggy Jewett, Bill Pelter's sister. Don had graduated from the University of Nevada in Civil Engineering. I felt he was a very good choice, because since Don held a California license, we were able to expand our market to that state and others. In 1967 Don joined our firm as chief estimator, and his wife, Peg, became our head bookkeeper.

In 1971—with the help of my daughter, Andrea, and Bill, her husband—we were successful in buying the one-half interest owned by the Avansinos. On 27 April 1971, we became 100 percent owners of Reno Iron. At that time, I continued as president, Don Jewett became vice president, Andrea became chairman of the board, Peggy Jewett was secretary-treasurer, and Bill Pelter a director.

That same board continues today, 15 years later. In 1972, Andrea was made chief executive officer, and she has run the company on a day-to-day basis from December of that year. Peg is our office manager; Don Jewett is semi-retired but he still participates in board activities; Bill Pelter, though he is an active

Reno physician, continues his involvement in Reno Iron. I am still at my forge 5 days a week. Monday, I take off to go to Rotary and spend the rest of the day in my office.

In 1983, we made the decision to move the plant to a larger location, away from the traffic on Keystone and Fourth Street. We bought 10 acres and 3 buildings located at 600 Spice Islands Drive, Sparks, Nevada, in the heart of the Sparks Industrial Park. We have 92,000 square feet under root. At that time, we continued our direction toward computerization.

Two years before, in 1981, we had purchased a robot, a machine that punches beams. It is fully computerized and has allowed us to fabricate structural steel at a far faster rate than we could before. In our new plant, we have many welding and burning machines that are computerized. We have a railroad track right in our building, and we own the spur. Our marketplace, today, is all of the 11 western states, but our main concentration is the Bay Area. We have become specialists in seismic structures—that is, reinforcing structural steel in configurations that make a building safer in an earthquake. These designs meet the California codes, and that is the type of buildings we go after.

The last building we did in Nevada was the Citicorps Bank in Las Vegas; that was about 2 years ago. Most of our buildings are in San Francisco, or near San Francisco. We ship our steel in our own trucks, if it is not sent by rail. Our cranes are located in California to erect our buildings. This last Friday, I signed over 200 paychecks, and that is about what our weekly payroll averages.

I have watched my business go from repairs of wagons pulled by horses, to fabricating a small component Bill Lear needed for his Lear Jets. I have watched it grow from the days before welding, when we bolted scrolls

together, to teaching welders during World War II in techniques we abandoned years ago. Today we have track-welders that are computerized and automatic.

Most of all, I have had the privilege to be part of a dream my father had for me to be a blacksmith. And I have watched my dream, for my daughter to run my business, to come true. What I wrote in our brochure holds true today:

Reno Iron's success, in an extremely competitive field, reflects careful management by soundly experienced, capable and conscientious personnel. That is what private enterprise is all about; we believe it is the backbone of our nation.

In my ninety-third year, to have been able to live in Nevada, to have been able to work among Nevadans for 76 years, to have been able to rear and educate my family in our community, and now to tell my story...my gratitude to God and to Nevada, my home, has no bounds.

PHOTOGRAPHS

See next page.



This remarkable expression of the blacksmith's craft was created by Andrew Ginocchio when he was 17 years old. Forged with the simplest tools from a single rod of mild steel, this rose served as his master craftsman's test. (Rich Johnston photo)



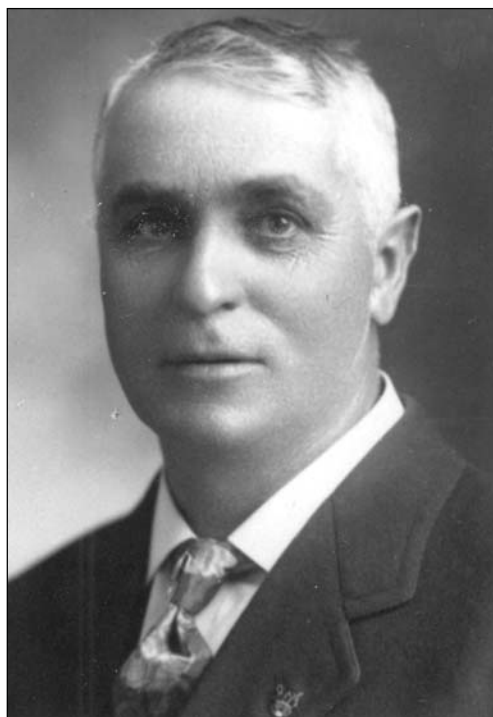
The interior of the Armstrong Manufacturing Co. shop, ca. 1915. R to l: Andrew Ginocchio, his helper Ed Schoen and Ed Casinella. (Others unidentified.) Andrew's two-cylinder Metz faces the camera.



During World War I, Andrew Ginocchio served with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. In 1918 he was the fireman for this locomotive hauling troops and supplies to the front.



Andrew Ginocchio was first employed at the Vietti and Bottini Blacksmith Shop in 1910. This later became the Reno Blacksmith Shop, and then Reno Iron Works. In this 1911 photo Andrew is flanked by his cousin, John Ginocchio (l), and Saverino Viette (r).



George Armstrong in 1917.
This prominent Reno businessman and owner
of the Armstrong Manufacturing Co. treated
Andrew "like a son." Andrew was employed by
the Armstrong Co., 1912-1917.



Reno Iron Works at 234 Chestnut Street in 1939.
Note that a blacksmith shop remains a part of the operation.



Andrew's daughter, Andrea, upon the occasion of her graduation from the University of Nevada in 1950. Andrea returned to Reno to become a partner and chairman of the board of directors of Reno Iron Works in 1971.

Photographs courtesy of Special Collections, University of Nevada, Reno Library:
Andrew Ginocchio Collection.

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A

American Legion, 120
 Armstrong, George, 89, 91, 92, 93, 112, 133, 153
 Armstrong Manufacturing Company (Reno), 89, 90-92, 99, 100-101, 116-117, 133, 153; customers, 94, 95-98, 99, 101-105, 106-107; employees, 108-109
 Army, United States, 64, 94, 118-132, 135
 Automobiles, 78-79, 96-97, 110-111, 216, 225
 Avansino, Earl, 227
 Avansino, John, 227
 Avanzino, Louis, 81-82

B

Bank of America. See Bank of Italy
 Bank of Italy (San Francisco, California), 139-142
 Barnes family (Durham, England; California), 138-139
 Basques, 60-61; Laxalt family, 60-61; restaurants (Reno), 74
 Battley, Gertrude "Goldie," 80
 Becker's Saloon (Reno), 75, 116, 160, 218
 Beemer, Elwood, 118
 Bell Telephone Company (Reno), 94-95
 Bender, Frank, 215, 217
 Bigelow, Mr. (Stockton, California), 133-134
 Blacks, 69; in Reno, 70-72, 73; prejudice, 69
 Blacksmithing, 145-146, 168-169, 170, 193-194; apprenticeship, 36-37, 39, 44-45, 100; division of labor, 44, 45, 46, 86, 90, 126; during

World War I, 119, 124-126; European methods of, 126-128, 181; shops in Reno, 86, 89, 183 (see also Armstrong Manufacturing Company; Reno Blacksmith Shop; Reno Iron Works; Vietti and Bottini Blacksmith Shop)

Blanche, Mr., 95
 Bolletino del Nevada, 80-81
 Bony Blacksmith Shop (Reno), 86, 87
 Bottini, John, 149
 Buick car, 146-147; dealership (foreign and domestic), 142-148, 149, 218; factory (Flint, Michigan), 143-146
 Businesses/services (Reno):
 barbershops, 84-85; bars, 75, 81, 116, 159-160, 167, 168; Bell Telephone Company, 94-95; blacksmith shops, 41, 43, 86, 89, 183 (see also Armstrong Manufacturing Company; Reno Blacksmith Shop; Reno Iron Works; Vietti and Bottini Blacksmith Shop); Commercial Hardware Company, 93; divorce trade, 154, 155-156; gambling establishments, 152, 160, 164; grocery stores, 43, 47-48; hotels/restaurants, 41-42, 74-75, 167, 211; laundry, 57-58; livery stables, 51; Nevada Transfer Company, 95-96, 173-174; railroads, 4-5, 24, 96-98; REO Motor Car Company, 194-195; Tony's El Patio Ballroom, 116, 160, 162; warehousing industry, 214-216, 217

C

C & C mine (Virginia City, Nevada), 12-13

Capurro family (Reno), 52-53
 Carson City, Nevada, 25, 28, 186
 Casazza family (Reno), 52
 Catholic church, 115-116
 Cemeteries (Reno): Masonic, 114; Odd Fellows, 114
 Central Pacific Railroad, 2-11; ethnic groups employed by, 4, 6, 7-8, 27-28; joining with Union Pacific Railroad, 2-3, 10-11; occupations, 2-3, 6-9; real estate, 5, 22; wages, 6, 9-10, 11
 Cerfoglio, Antonio, 167
 Chamber of Commerce, Reno, 92, 93, 217
 Chevrolet agency (Lincoln, California), 142
 Chinese, 151; employed by Central Pacific Railroad, 4, 7-8; in Reno, 5, 57-59, 64, 65; in Virginia City, 27-28
 Chism, John, 224
 Civil Air Patrol (Reno), 213-214
 Clark, Walter E., 220
 Colombo Hotel (Reno), 167
 Corbett Blacksmith Shop (Reno), 86, 87-88
 Curti, Philip, 167

D

Dairying (northern California), 54
 Dangberg, H. F., 101-103
 Dangberg, John, 101-103
 Dangberg family (Carson Valley), 190
 Dante Club (Reno), 196-201
 Dempsey, Jack, 116-117
 Depression (U.S.), 147, 169-173
 Divorce trade (Reno), 154, 155-156,
 Dressler, Herb, 189
 Dressler family (Carson Valley), 190
 Durham, John C., 194-195

E

Education in Italy, 34-35, 36-37, 39
 Education in United States, 63-67, 79-80, 218-219; citizenship education, 64-66; ethnic diversity, 64-68; teachers, 63, 66
 Ellis Island, 222-223
 Europa Hotel (Reno), 41-42, 74, 90, 152

F

Fallon Naval Air Station (Nevada), 206
 Farming, 52-56, 193, 194, 195-196
 Ferretti, Mary, 63
 Ferretti, Matilda, 63
 Fishing, 30-31, 73, 77-78
 Fleischmann, Max C., 177-178
 Fort Benjamin Harris (Indianapolis, Indiana), 121
 French, 60, 139; employed by Central Pacific Railroad, 4; in Reno, 61, 64, 75
 Frisch, Roy, 163

G

Gambling (Reno), 152, 160, 163-168, 217
 Genoa, Italy, 129-131
 Genoa, Nevada, 25-27
 Germans, 55, 132, 139, 157; discrimination against, 153; employed by Central Pacific Railroad, 4; in Carson Valley, 26, 101; in Reno, 5, 59-60, 64, 133; in Virginia City, 13-14, 22, 28-29
 Getchell (Noble H.) family (Nevada), 109
 Getchell mine (Humboldt County, Nevada), 99, 109
 Giannini, Amadeo, 139-140
 Ginocchio, Giovanni (father), 1-35, 37, 39, 42
 Ginocchio, Giovanni "John" (father's cousin), 1, 2, 36, 40

Ginocchio, Giovanni "John"
 (cousin), 40-41, 46, 88,
 115-116, 149, 227
 Ginocchio, Louie (brother),
 131
 Ginocchio, Maria (nee Rossi)
 (mother), 33-35
 Ginocchio, Viola (nee Chilton)
 (wife), 138, 140-141, 142,
 144, 180, 226
 Ginocchio (Giovanni) family
 (Italy), 32, 33, 35-36, 115,
 128, 130-132
 Golden Gate Bridge (San
 Francisco, California),
 180-181
 Granata, John, 80-81, 196,
 198, 199
 Granata family (Reno), 81

H

Harrah's hotel, (Reno), 182,
 184-186
 Heidtmann, Harry, 116, 217-218
 Herlong army base (Califor-
 nia), 204, 206-207
 Horgan, Jack, 93
 Hunting, 20, 30, 62, 77

I

Immigration, 1, 39-40, 42,
 151-152
 Indians, 5-6, 22, 73; at
 Pyramid Lake, 6, 73; dis-
 crimination against, 16-18;
 in Carson Valley, 186-187,
 188, 190; in Reno, 72-74,
 190-191; in Virginia City,
 16-17; women, 72, 73-74
 Influenza epidemic (World War
 I), 120
 Irish, 15-16, 55; in Virginia
 City, 15-16
 Italians, 42, 61-62, 88, 222;
 barbers, 84-85; bars, 81,
 167, 168; employed by Cen-
 tral Pacific Railroad, 2, 3,
 4, 8-9; farmers, 27, 52,
 55-56, 157, 195-196; grocery
 stores, 76; hotels/restau-
 rants, 41-42, 74-75; in

banking, 139; in gambling,
 163-167, in Italy, 1, 32,
 33-36, 115, 131-132; in
 medicine, 83; in Odd
 Fellows, 113; in politics,
 81-82; in Reno, 5, 41-42,
 46, 52, 64, 67, 70, 74-76,
 80-85, 88, 150-151, 163-168,
 196-201; in Virginia City,
 12, 13, 15; newspapers, 80-
 81, 196-197; Sicilians,
 84-85, 167

J

Jail, Douglas County
 (Gardnerville, Nevada),
 186-190
 Japanese, 151, 152; in Reno,
 64, 67-68
 Jeffries-Johnson fight (Reno),
 68-70, 98
 Jewett, Don, 227, 228
 Jewett, Peggy, 227, 228
 Jose, Dick, 161-162
 Judson Pacific (San Francisco,
 California), 180, 181-182,
 187, 191, 226

K

Kaiser, Henry J., 208
 Kaiser shipyard (Oakland,
 California), 207, 208
 Knie, Mr., 59

L

Labor, organized, 191-193;
 Miners' Union (Virginia
 City, Nevada), 15, 19-20;
 unions in Reno Blacksmith
 Shop, 191; United Steel-
 workers, 225
 Lake, Myron C., 21, 23
 Lake's Crossing. See Reno,
 Nevada
 Lake Street bridge (Reno),
 21-22, 23, 224
 Larson Construction Company,
 175-176, 177

Lawton Hot Springs (Reno),
98-99
Laxalt, Paul, 60-61
Laxalt family (Nevada), 60-61
Lincoln, California, 142, 143
Lincoln Hall (University of
Nevada-Reno), 104-105, 118,
184
Lincoln Highway, 92-94
Lombardi, Louie, 168
Lombardi, Sam, 168
Love, Malcolm A., 221

M

McCarran, Patrick A., 76
MacCauley, Thomas W., 183
Mafia, 166-167
Malone, George, 106-108
Masons, 14, 114-115; cemetery
(Reno), 114
Mexicans, 151; employed by
Central Pacific Railroad, 4;
in Virginia City, 13
Mines and mining, 11, 13, 99,
194-195; C & C mine, 12-13;
during Prohibition, 158;
ethnic employees, 13-14;
Miners' Union (Virginia
City), 15, 19-20; Tonopah,
Nevada, 194; tools, 62-63,
99; Virginia City, Nevada,
11, 12-14, 19-20, 62; wages,
11
Miners' Union (Virginia City,
Nevada), 15, 19-20
Minniggiio, Antonio, 83
Morrill Hall (University of
Nevada-Reno), 104
Mount Rose School (Reno), 153
Mussolini, Benito, 197-198,
199

N

National Origins Act (1924),
151-152
Nelson, George "Baby Face,"
162-163
Nevada, California and Oregon
(NC & O) Railroad, 96-98

Nevada Transfer Company
(Reno), 95-96, 173-174
Nye, James W., 23-24

O

Oakland Bay Bridge (San
Francisco, California),
180-181
Occupations: blacksmithing,
44, 45, 46, 86, 90, 126;
cook, 3, 7-9, 27-28, 30-31;
farming/ranching, 27, 155,
157-158, 193, 194, 195, 196;
janitorial work, 28; lumber-
jacks, 42, 48-49, 50, 193;
mining, 11, 13; railroad
laborer, 2-3, 45, 124-127;
veterinarian, 35-36; wages,
9-10, 11, 31, 42, 88, 192
Odd Fellows, 112-114, 118;
cemetery (Reno), 114
Oppio family (Reno), 53, 55,
68
Organizations: American
Legion, 120; Dante Club,
196-201; Masons, 14, 114-
115; Miners' Union, 15,
19-20; Odd Fellows, 112-114,
118; Rebekah Lodge, 113,
118, 138; Rotary Club, 217,
220, 221; Salvation Army,
212, 213; YMCA, 212
Ormsby House Hotel (Carson
City, Nevada), 186

P

Palace Club (Reno), 164
Panama-Pacific Exposition (San
Francisco, California),
110-111
Parmigiani, Mr., 171-172
Pecetti, Tony, 160-161, 162,
223-224
Pelter, Andrea (nee
Ginocchio) (daughter),
144, 153-154, 200, 213-214,
227-228
Pelter, Bill, 227, 228
Pete, Maude, 74
Petricciani, John, 163-166,
167

Philanthropy, 219-220, 222-224
 Pladero family (Reno), 61
 Prohibition, 135-136, 154-156,
 157-159, 167, 186, 212
 Prostitution, 17, 18, 212

R

Ramelli family (northern California), 54, 195
 Rebekah Lodge, 113, 118, 138
 Religion: Catholics, 14-16, 115-116
 Reno, Nevada, 21, 22, 23-25, 93, 149-150, 170; Basques in, 74; blacks in, 70-72, 73; businesses/services (see Businesses/services, Reno); Chinese in, 5, 57-59, 64, 65; Depression, 170; flood (1955), 223-224; French in, 61, 64, 75; Germans in, 5, 59-60, 64, 133; Indians in, 72-74, 190-191; Italians in, 5, 41-42, 46, 52, 64, 67, 70, 74-76, 80-85, 88, 150-151, 163-168, 196-201; Japanese in, 64, 67-68; Lake's Crossing, 21, 22, 23; organizations, 14, 112-114, 118, 120, 196-201, 212, 217, 220-221; structures (see Structures, Reno); Swedes in, 64, 75; World War II, effects of, 203, 211-219
 Reno Blacksmith Shop (Reno), 41, 149, 168-171, 172-173, 183-184, 193; customers, 152, 155, 156, 162-163, 164-165, 167, 172-173, 175-176, 178; employees, 171-172; suppliers, 156-157. See also Reno Iron Works; Vietti and Bottini Blacksmith Shop
 Reno High School (Reno): private night school for immigrants, 64-68
 Reno Iron Works (Reno), 183-186, 193-196, 202-229; board of directors, 227-228; competitors, 183; computerized technology, 228-229;

customers, 178-181, 184-189, 191, 194-196, 204-206, 208-209, 211, 215, 228-229; employees, 190-191, 193, 194, 202, 206, 207-208, 214, 219-220, 222, 223; labor, organized, 191, 192-193, 225; suppliers, 180, 205, 225-226; wages, 192; war effort, 202-211; welders, training of, 207-211, 229. See also Reno Blacksmith Shop; Vietti and Bottini Blacksmith Shop

Richelieu Hotel (Reno), 90
 Ritter, Henry, 60
 Riverside Hotel (Reno), 21
 Rotary Club (Reno), 217, 220, 221
 Rossi family (Italy), 33-34

S

S. S. Allbright Company (Sacramento, California), 136-138
 Salvation Army, 212, 213
 Sauer, George, 172
 Serafina, Sister, 115-116
 Sky Ranch (Washoe County, Nevada) 213
 Spanish: employed by Central Pacific Railroad, 4; in Virginia City, 16
 Sparks, Nevada, 88, 89, 99
 Sports and leisure, 9, 15, 22, 28-30, 76, 78-80, 138, 212-214; bocci ball, 77; boxing, 162; fishing, 77-78; gambling (Reno), 152, 160, 163-165, 166-168; miniature golf courses, 150, 151; prizefighting, 68-70, 98; Tony's El Patio Ballroom, 160-161, 162; travel, 150
 Star Barrel House (Reno), 168
 Stead Air Force Base (Reno), 204-206, 211, 213, 217
 Stewart, Harry E., 78
 Stockton, California, 133-134
 Stout, Minard, 221
 Structural steel working, 178-193, 204-207, 215, 225

Structures (Nevada): Citicorps Bank (Las Vegas), 228; jail, Douglas County (Gardner-ville), 186-190; Ormsby House Hotel (Carson City), 186

Structures (Reno), 24-25, 83-84, 179-180, 182-183; Armstrong Manufacturing Company, 89, 90; bars, 75, 116, 160, 164, 167, 168; Becker's Saloon, 75, 116, 160; Bell Telephone building, 184; bridges, 21-22, 23, 180-181, 191-192, 224; dance halls, 22-23, 28-29, 160; Europa Hotel, 41-42, 152; fire house, 83-84; First Interstate Bank, 182; gambling establishments, 152, 160, 164; Ginocchio house, 153; Harrah's hotel, 182, 184-186; hotels, 21, 41-42, 61, 90, 152, 167, 179, 183, 184-186; Lake Street bridge, 21-22, 23, 224; Lincoln Hall (University of Nevada), 104; Louvre Bar, 164; Majestic Theater, 161; miniature golf courses, 150, 151; Mizpah Hotel, 179, 183; Morrill Hall (University of Nevada), 104; Mount Rose School, 153; Nevada Transfer warehouse, 174; police department, 156-157; Reno Blacksmith Shop, 41; Reno High School, 64; Reno Iron Works, 228; Reno Mercantile Store, 114; Richelieu Hotel, 90; Riverside Hotel, 21; Sierra Street bridge, 191-192; Tony's El Patio Ballroom, 160-161; Toscano Hotel, 152; Vietti and Bottini Blacksmith Shop, 41, 42, 44; warehouses, 174, 214-215

Swedes, 30-31, 56-57, 139; employed by Central Pacific Railroad, 4; in Reno, 64, 75; in Virginia City, 13

Swiss-Italians: in northern California, 54

T

Tonopah, Nevada, 194

Tony's El Patio Ballroom (Reno), 116, 160-161, 162

Toscano Hotel (Reno), 42, 75, 152

Transportation: airplane, 95, 213-214; automotive, 47, 50, 78-79, 100-103, 110-111, 143, 144-145, 146-147, 168-169, 193, 194, 211, 214-215, 216, 225; Lake Street bridge, 21-22, 23; Lincoln Highway, 92-94; livery stables, 51; lumbering, 50; produce delivery, 53, 55-56; rail bus, 96-97; railroad in France, 32, 119, 122-125; railroads in U.S., 2-11, 24, 31, 62, 96-98, 101; ship, 31-32; streetcars/buses, 75, 137-138, 164; teams, 21, 53-54; wagon, 47, 168

Twentieth Century Fox, 161

U

Udine, Italy, 129

Union Iron Works (San Francisco, California), 1, 40, 133, 134

Union Pacific Railroad. See Central Pacific Railroad

U.S. 40 (Victory Highway), 93

United Steelworkers, 225

University of Nevada-Reno, 44, 104-106, 109-110, 118, 119, 178, 179, 199, 200, 219-222, 223

V

Verdi Lumber Company (Verdi, Nevada), 50

Vietti family (Reno), 45-46

Vietti and Bottini Blacksmith Shop (Reno), 41, 42-43, 44-45, 46, 88, 100, 148; competition, 85-86, 89; customers, 47-63, 78, 87-88; employees, 46; suppliers,

86-87; wages, 42, 88. See
also Reno Blacksmith Shop;
Reno Iron Works
Virginia and Truckee (V & T)
Railroad, 24, 62
Virginia City, Nevada, 11-12,
14, 16-17, 20, 21, 31;
Chinese in, 27-28; dance
hall, 22-23, 28-29; Germans
in, 13-14, 22, 28-29;
Indians, 16-17; Irish in,
15-16; Italians in, 12, 13,
15; living conditions, 19;
Mexicans in, 13, 16; mines
and mining, 11-15, 19-20,
62-63, 99, 158; prostitu-
tion, 18; Spanish in, 16;
Swedes in, 13; Virginia and
Truckee Railroad, 24
Vogliotti family (Reno), 58
Volstead Act, 164

W

Warehousing industry, 214-215,
216, 217
Whittell, George, 175-177
Wingfield, George, 18, 99, 217
Women, 212; careers, 153-154;
in assemblyline work, 144,
in education, 67, 79-80; in
war effort, 213; Indian, 72,
73-74
World War I, 94, 118-132
World War II, 202-214

XYZ

YMCA, 212

